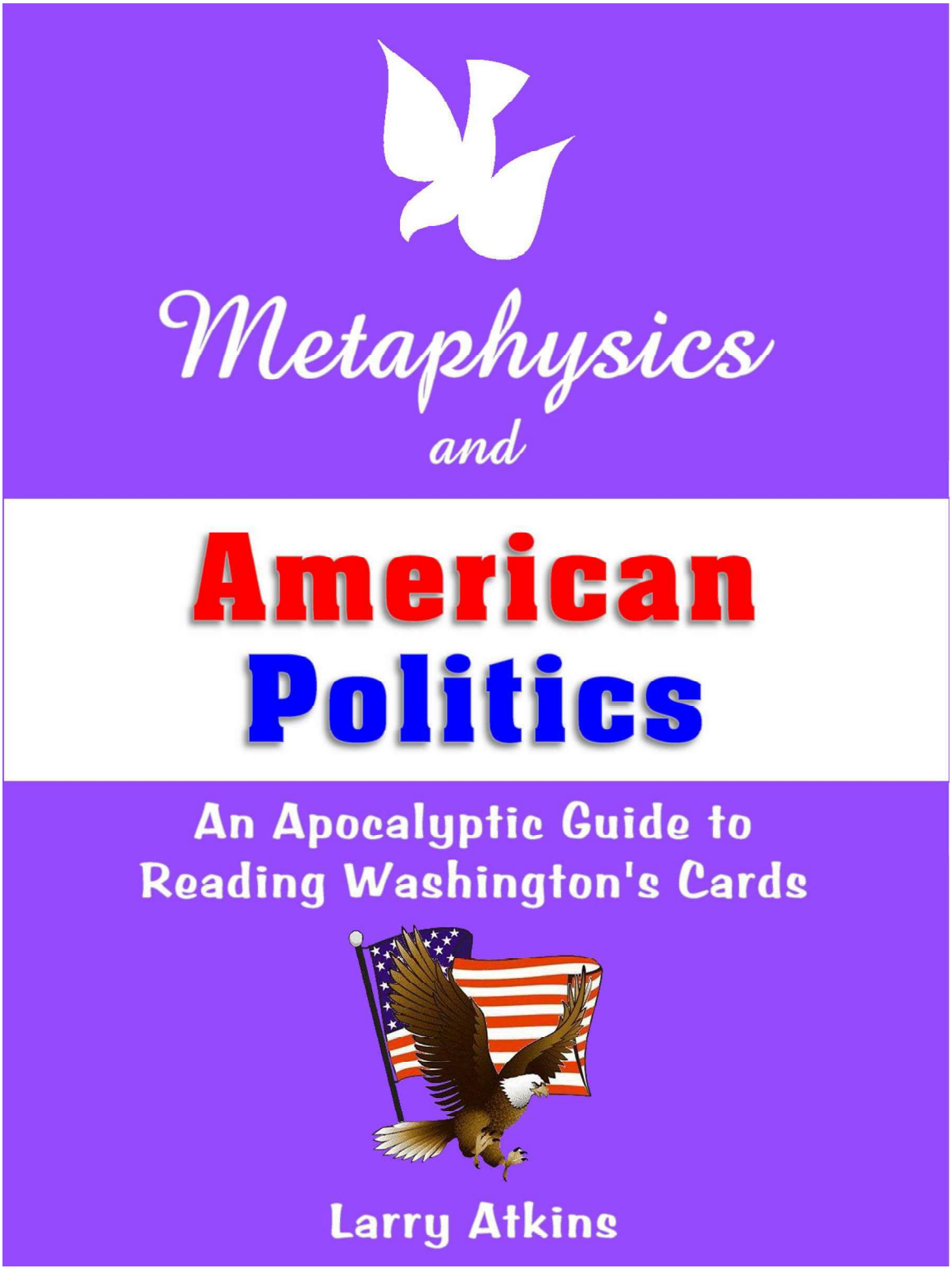

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Metaphysics and American Politics

by Larry Atkins

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To the young and the young at heart who will continue to explore the wonders of Apocalyptic Earth long after my old bones have bought the Farm.

Fear is the mind-killer

— Paul Atreides in *Dune*, by Frank Herbert

Evil triumphs when good people do nothing

— Edmund Burke, Irish statesman and philosopher (paraphrased)

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Abbreviations and Information

WARNING: This book is loaded with adult spirituality. Some material may be unsuitable for Piscean-Age dinosaurs and pre-Apocalyptic throwbacks.

The abbreviations "CE" (Common Era) and "BCE" (Before Common Era) are used in place of "AD" and "BC" respectively, in dates throughout the text. Either convention is as valid as the other, and is a matter of personal preference. The author felt that in a work dealing with the merits of many current and ancient world religions, it is preferable to avoid the traditional convention that favors only one of these venerable faiths.

All illustrations are original drawings by the author. Some, such as the Qabalistic Tree of Life and the Caduceus of Hermes, are adapted from ancient glyphs that are widely published in many variations. The author's renderings are based on general knowledge, and not on any specific work. Any close similarity to specific drawings of others is incidental and unintended.

Nothing in this work is offered as legal or medical advice, or as any other type of advice for which professionals are the appropriate sources. This work is not intended to be acted upon by anyone in dealing with any issue for which professional counseling or treatment is appropriate; and it is suggested that individuals consult a licensed professional in all such matters. The general intents of this work are to raise the spiritual and political awareness of the public, and to recommend ideas pursuant to political and constitutional reform through exercise of free speech and due process.

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Preface

Metaphysics and American Politics is partly the product of a lifelong ambition. The prospect of bringing science and religion into agreement has intrigued me since childhood. It just never seemed right that these two fascinating subjects should deal with separate worlds and be irreconcilable. Another fifty years of that Grail quest finally yielded a collection of insights worth sharing.

The other ambition that inspired this work surfaced in adulthood, and is a bit more down-to-earth. Along with a healthy majority of my fellow Americans I share a grave concern about the moral and social direction of our nation, and about the quality of leadership provided by its political establishment. As well it should, this concern extends to the rest of Western civilization, which shares much of the same culture and has experienced many similar problems.

A remarkable realization is that these two causes share a common solution. America has long been jostled back and forth between two major political parties. Each is a lightning rod for many special interests, lying to the "left" or the "right" of some national norm. The "center" seems too often to be left out in the cold. A related and curious phenomenon is that much of the religious establishment tends to be politically conservative, while most scientists tend to be liberal. In pondering these issues it occurred to me that scientists are not liberal because of their scientific thinking, as some of them might claim; but rather because their intellect is directed toward the material world. Many religious leaders, in contrast, are very conservative because of having their heads in the spiritual clouds, while not having their feet planted firmly upon the ground. Successful application of scientific thinking to the spiritual arena not only will bring science and religion into better equilibrium, but also will inspire holistic attitudes that will energize the center of the social and political spectrums. This can address much of the social crisis, as the chapters ahead will demonstrate.

Spiritual science is not new, but is only recently coming back into vogue. The pages that follow will introduce some impressive schools of Western scientific spiritual thought, a few of which have existed for more than two millennia. They are parts of what is often referred to as metaphysical studies. Throughout the centuries, as at present, they have attracted a specialized and limited following. Certain fringe aspects of metaphysics such as daily horoscopes, sign matching for lovers, and psychic hot lines have long been popular. However, these often have been dealt with in such a petty manner as to discredit the social importance and scientific validity of loftier metaphysical subjects. Today's holistic and self-help groups are an improvement, but usually stop short of the deepest aspects of top-notch spiritual science.

My intent is to offer an entertaining work that will bring its message to as many people as possible. Academic treatises, limited to the ivory tower, are not as effective at inducing social change. However, there is a more profound reason for humor, which may require a little increase in spiritual awareness for some to appreciate: The human condition, in which all seems so serious, is actually an illusion, though often solid and sometimes painful. The only way that a society of infinite and immortal beings can rise above this illusion is to comprehend the fact that we, ourselves, have created it and can dissolve any or all of it; and to realize that being "only human" is as ridiculous as fearing one's own shadow.

Spiritual awakening is inherently embarrassing. Real growth has occurred when one can look back and say, "What a big dummy I was!" There is no way out that will avoid the realization of this cosmic humor. Sometimes the way up can be a little bumpy, but if continued it inevitably

becomes fun, and even funny. Those who believe that the way to salvation must forever be a path of drudgery, because of human depravity, are just clinging tightly to the depravity itself. True, the task ahead is full of challenges and is not as easy as falling off of a log. However, a half century or so of constructive self-embarrassment has led me to realize that most drudgery arises from a failure to set one's sights wide enough and one's aspirations high enough.

Larry Atkins

Chapter 1

A New Millennium and the Demise of Enchantment

Metaphysics and politics seldom joined hands to make national news in 20th century America. Perhaps the most memorable instance occurred during the Reagan administration. It was reported that the President and First Lady consulted an astrologer before making many day-to-day decisions. Much of the public snickered. The prevalent attitude seemed to be that daily horoscopes were too superfluous a basis for making serious, "real life" decisions affecting the nation. I was less critical, but indifferent. Having studied psychic and spiritual subjects in depth since 1969, I cannot discount astrology as a moderately good predictor of human personality. I've never taken it seriously as a basis for decision making. However, considering that so many Americans are unaware of the joy and power of legitimate and well-applied metaphysics, the Reagans deserved credit for trying.

Nevertheless, attitudes have undergone a stealthy shift in the interval between the Reagan era and entry into the third millennium. The popular holistic, or wholistic, health movement has eroded the notion that medicine, nutrition, environmental concerns, physical science, and religion deal with separate worlds, and thus have little connection to each other. There is growing awareness that a curious spiritual reality hides behind the outward appearance of human existence, and that this component of collective consciousness has not been explained adequately by traditional religion.

A new breed of metaphysical interest is emerging – no longer limited to astrologers and crystal readers, but pursued by many citizens, religious or not, who seek personal improvement through a better understanding of the fascinating worlds within and without. Even so, truth seekers are left to their own devices in acquiring a metaphysical education. Many who wander through a bookstore, or who attend this or that group, end up studying a few specialized and offbeat areas because of lack of a good introduction to the most profound, core subjects. Also, many books on the deeper subjects are written rather cryptically or academically, therefore being a rather steep climb for a newcomer. The first several chapters that follow are intended to bring alive, in terms of the "real world," some of the deepest of profound Western metaphysical thought. Some Big Bang cosmology, quantum particle physics, human biology, psychology, and sociology are thrown in as a bonus.

As for American politics – while this arena also is a matter of increasing public attention, it is all too often with scorn for the existing system. There is growing frustration that the future of our nation, and even the world, is being determined by a political process that is becoming ever more polarized and vicious; and that our country is being run in a manner that is anything but competent. The later chapters, therefore, attempt to shed a great deal of light on the underworkings of a broken political system, and to set a direction for its redemption by application of the insights gained from modern metaphysics.

The transition from the second millennium to the third has long carried its share of prophesies. Even more were generated as it approached. To mention a few: the dawning of an enlightened Age of Aquarius; the Apocalypse; the Second Coming of Christ; the end of the world; and widespread computer malfunction resulting in the shutdown of public utilities and general pandemonium.

The Y2K computer fiasco fizzled; but it did so only because vigilant citizens saw the danger coming and rose to the occasion. As a programmer even I had my humble role, spending a boring New Year's Eve night at work, ready to cover a disaster that months of team work already had prevented. America was the leader in these efforts, sharing her expertise with others around the globe. Mankind's future is in its own hands. Seeing the storm coming and rising to the occasion makes the difference between survival and chaos. The world's most prosperous have a unique responsibility to lead the way. These are lessons well learned, and are very pertinent to the topic at hand. There is a storm afoot that is far more ominous than computer bugs; and surviving it will depend, first and foremost, on how America deals with it.

The most interesting of the millennial prophesies may well be the Apocalypse – a sequence of worldwide, catastrophic events predicted in the Book of Revelation, leading to the establishment of a new Divine Order. And while the Apocalyptic metaphor is very applicable to the theme, I've chosen to present it in a provocative new light that should resonate well beyond the Christian community. This connection is especially interesting because of recent historical events, particularly in the period following World War II. These have included not only a variety of widespread hardships and challenges, but also an acceleration of social change exceeding any historical precedent.

The world applauded the fall of the Iron Curtain, but was left with a Russia reeling from economic chaos and maintaining a strained and distrusting relationship with the West. The liberal attitudes of the 1960s triggered an explosion in drug use, and fueled an international drug trade of monstrous proportions. The Civil Rights movement of that era, along with implementation of extensive welfare programs, promised to resolve many major social problems. However, these often have come into controversy and disrepute, being perceived by some as fostering social degradation and a decline in personal responsibility. Affirmative action is seen by some as a major tool against discrimination, while others view it as discrimination built into the law itself.

Legal and illegal immigration raise considerable controversy. The tug-of-war drags on over conservative religious morality vs. gay rights. AIDS is a medical phenomenon like none in recallable history, and is forever changing social patterns in every nation and community. However, depending on the religious and cultural background of the observer, this epidemic can be viewed as anything from a lightning rod for sympathy to deserved punishment for depraved lifestyles. As if all this weren't enough to keep our lives exciting and challenged to the hilt, foreign and domestic terrorism has brought the violence of wartime battlefields potentially to the doorsteps of every human being in all corners of the globe.

For the citizens of America who are concerned about these issues, many questions must come to mind regarding this nation's policies and the quality of its leadership. Can the politicians in Washington be trusted to make wise decisions affecting America's future? What will that future be like for our children and grandchildren? What constructive actions might be undertaken to improve that future? What lurks around the corner if our leaders continue "business as usual"?

Can the two-party political system address and resolve America's needs and challenges? Are there any sensible alternatives? Is there a massive conspiracy involving the two major parties with the intent of preventing substantial and needed reform? Is there a conspiracy among the world's elite to subject all citizens of Earth to a world government, facilitated in part by the United Nations? Or are such allegations mere grandstanding by the disaffected and paranoid?

If the continuing political debate were converging on a solution we could rest assured that our tried-and-true processes are working. However, after decades of volatility beginning in the

1960s there comes a point at which we realize that a more radical, grass-roots solution is required if we are ever to find our way again.

A crucial issue is answering the question, "What are true American values?" With such great diversity of culture and opinion represented within the country's population, is it even possible to come up with a meaningful answer? Has America lost her identity? Or is there a logical process by which some inherent, if obscured, values may be brought into the light of day? Can the soul of the nation be revived by shedding some new light on her rightful destiny?

A report that makes a commendable attempt to address this very issue was produced in 1998. *A Call to Civil Society: Why Democracy Needs Moral Truths* was produced by the Council on Civil Society. The Council is a joint project of the Institute for American Values – a national organization focused on issues of family and civil society – and the University of Chicago Divinity School. Among the conclusions in this report is the assertion that the laws and working standards of our nation must be derived from a preexistent higher morality, rather than morality being derived from laws. The report states:

> If independent moral truth does not exist, all that is left is power.[1]

It may now be apparent why it is needful to deal with politics and spirit in a single work. It is not possible even to understand humanity, let alone to formulate good policies for society, without using genuine spiritual insight as the basis. The humanists have tried diligently for the last several decades. One need only look around at the ruins and chaos to perceive the degree of their failure.

Science – the great driving force of modern civilization – often appears to be in conflict with religion. This is obvious in the case of fundamentalist Christianity. However, with religious conservatives clamoring to salvage traditional religion as a redeeming force in America and the West, it seems that science and its materialistic grip just won't let go. The issue is far from being as simple as the debate over creationism vs. evolution. Centuries of science and technology have created an entrenched mindset throughout Western civilization that is incompatible with authoritarian or unquestioning religious faiths. In particular, it appears incompatible with fear of the hereafter as the basis for morality.

Western social consciousness reached a unique and critical point by the end of the 20th century. The world has long been held together by an enchantment based on the traditional religions. For the Western world this has meant mostly the many variations of Judaism and Christianity. Nevertheless – whatever good these venerable faiths still may hold in the way of moral guidance and spiritual inspiration – at the dawn of the third millennium the long-effective enchantment is broken and evaporating. What is needed is some new enchantment; or better still, a major awakening of a profound spiritual nature. A renaissance of legitimate spiritual science can be a major catalyst for such an awakening.

A word that refers collectively to all schools of spiritual science is "metaphysics." If you tour the metaphysical section of a typical bookstore you will see works on a fascinating array of subjects – past lives, astrology, meditation, and yoga being examples. Much of this material is useful and intellectually stimulating. However, very little of it attempts to address anything like the moral and ethical issues confronting America. Nevertheless, the most lofty and powerful of

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[1]. The Council on Civil Society, *A Call to Civil Society: Why Democracy Needs Moral Truths* (New York: Institute for American Values, 1998), p. 15. Used by permission of David Blankenhorn, Institute for American Values.

the metaphysical subjects are quite applicable to moral and ethical issues, the matter being explored in the chapters ahead. The problem is that most contemporary metaphysical writers seem to avoid these issues deliberately, to avoid stepping on anyone's toes!

In contrast, if you tour a section of religious literature most of it is morally oriented. However, as the old enchantment evaporates, America's younger population demands a more scientific basis for approaching all aspects of life. Therefore, with neither the Right nor the Left providing an adequate moral or ethical basis for current and future generations, it is little wonder that America is finding herself in a social crisis.

I'd like to return in my next incarnation to an America in which the freedom and prosperity so often taken for granted is still intact and growing. Of course, for those of my fellow citizens who are skeptical that they, or I, will spend more than one lifetime on this planet, their concern for the welfare of future generations should be adequate motivation to give this material thoughtful consideration.

It is not my intent to persuade people to abandon any theory, doctrine, or faith that is meaningful and helpful to them. Religion and metaphysics should be one, the duality being wholly artificial. Unfortunately, metaphysical thought and practice has been suppressed for centuries from mainstream religion, and often limited to secret societies who would have risked persecution if they had operated openly. Because of the vacuum caused by this suppression, it was inevitable that certain unhealthy attitudes and false perspectives would assume the rightful place of metaphysical knowledge within religion. My criticisms, therefore, are directed to these deficiencies. This is an invitation for more Americans and Westerners to become metaphysically literate, and thus to benefit from the spiritual adrenaline and vigor that this body of knowledge can provide – often in conjunction with other meaningful religious beliefs and practices.

Through the next few chapters we will depart from earthly political and social issues for a rather spectacular and exciting tour of metaphysics. While the spiritual information is all quite real and serious, the tour is presented, metaphorically, as a blastoff and space journey through some of the most fascinating and colorful areas of the solar system. Whether you're a novice or an "initiated" psychic, I doubt that you'll be disappointed. But stand warned: some of these bands of extraterrestrial aura and radiation can permanently alter your consciousness! You may not even realize that this is happening during the journey, while you're occupied with just enjoying the scenery. However, when we return for a tour of Earth in the subsequent chapters you may find yourself beginning to develop some new super powers. The first will be a kind of X-ray vision. You will find yourself looking well beneath the surfaces of psychology, social phenomena, and even the physical universe to see underlying causes whose existence you never suspected. This can lead, in turn, to a new understanding and appreciation of Who You Are, resulting in expanded ability to help yourself and those you love.

Finally, I hope that your new powers will permit you to see the political gyrations of America and the West for both the tragedy and the slapstick comedy that they are. With a little more study, meditation, and practice I'm confident that you will find yourself developing the power and the wisdom to guide humankind through the Apocalypse, which we are now experiencing, and onward into an enlightened New Age. In fact, once you've seen the future this planet faces if we fail, it's my hope and belief that you will be unable to do otherwise than to fulfill this Great Work, your higher destiny. The rewards – both personal and humanitarian – are immeasurable.

If you wish to accompany me on this spiritual space journey, then grab your helmet and assemble in the conference room as we move on to the next chapter. Before we proceed to the launch pad for a blastoff into the metaphysical realms, a short briefing will be in order on some

of the basic methods of science.

Chapter 2

Science 101 for Spiritual Astronauts

By the time most of us reach our fourth year of life we have formed a fair impression of what science and religion are all about. The first truth learned is that these are like night and day, hot and cold, Earth and sky – and that never the twain shall meet. Science, after all, is about the material world that can be felt, eaten, and measured. It is about knowing how things work, and about using this knowledge to develop a more interesting and comfortable lifestyle. It is a never-finished subject, as it is limited only by our curiosity and ingenuity.

Nonetheless, science cannot hope to address the spiritual, which we discovered courtesy of our Sunday-school teacher. Religion is a body of assumptions that have no basis other than sheer faith. This, of course, is complicated by the fact that there are numerous faiths. Therefore, the nature of things heavenly depends upon which church or synagogue Mom dragged us to after making us dress in those uncomfortable clothes. To make things worse, some of the religious devout have a pompous habit of saying, "There are many things that we humans don't understand." To seek understanding is to question, and to question is the enemy of faith. However, like science, religion does have a noble aspiration to improve the quality of human life. It does this by teaching morality, which, in turn, is based upon the particular faith. This, it seems, is why the inquisitive nature of a free intellect is threatening to some faiths: If the faiths, themselves, are subject to question, people might work their way into moral freedom as well!

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The foregoing is the impression held, to some degree, by most of the world's population. It may reflect the status quo, but is naïve because the picture does not have to be so bleak. If we're going to formulate a science of spirit, we first need to dispel the notion that "a study of the material world" is even close to a proper definition of science. Nevertheless, acknowledging the formidable success of modern science in studying the material world, we must now take a look at what good scientists really do – and what they do *not* do.

Gullibility and skepticism are, alike, major enemies of science. Common sense tells us that good scientists don't include those very gullible souls who believe every rumor that blows in the wind. If there's an odd light in the sky, that crowd *knows* it's an alien spacecraft, and is certain that the statements of investigators in the morning paper are part of a government cover-up. However, it may be less obvious that too much skepticism can be just as detrimental to scientific progress. This one has bitten even many of the world's greatest scientists from time to time. Albert Einstein, for instance, was reluctant to embrace some of the theories of other scientists in the field of quantum particle physics. Einstein is famous for his work in understanding relativity, which deals with gravity and its effects on the heavenly bodies. That area of physics is very "deterministic" – meaning, for example, that if one knows the exact state of affairs at the current moment in time, one can calculate where the planets will be three months from now. Quantum physicists, however, were concluding that the gyrations of slippery little subatomic particles are not so easy to predict, displaying certain random behavior. Einstein initially balked at the idea, and protested metaphorically that God doesn't play dice with the universe. Nevertheless, quantum theory has withstood the tests of time and experiment. The lesson, of course, is that what might have appeared obvious, up to the moment, can turn out to be less than the whole

picture, as our understanding of existence evolves. Therefore, while good scientists are skeptical of explanations that sound corny, or that violate well-accepted theories, they will not rule out any reasonable possibility unless it has been thoroughly disproved.

If moderate skepticism, then, is an important ingredient of good science, another of its best tools is the quest for elegance. Scientists recoil from explanations that lack elegance – meaning that they sound too complicated or contrived. They are attracted to simple theories that explain many things at once. Cultures past believed that the Earth was flat, and that anyone foolish enough to sail to the far edge of the ocean would risk falling off into oblivion. The Earth was also the center of the universe, while the Sun, Moon, and stars circled it in the skies. It goes without saying that current astronomical theories explain much more in a far simpler manner. The Sun is one of many stars – not a unique object. Earth is just one of many planets, and the Moon shares the heavens with many more of its kind. Gravity explains the motion of the celestial bodies, with no need for special rules to accommodate a privileged few.

The ability to perceive elegance is part of yet another scientific tool – the intuition. While logical reasoning is a classic tool of science, many laymen are unaware of the important role that intuition has played in scientific development. These two tools are often described as “left-brain” and “right-brain” respectively. Modern science could not even exist without sophisticated mathematics. However, when left-brain efforts with mind-boggling physics problems get frustrating results, those scientists who balance the process with a healthy dose of intuition often have the “Eureka!” insights. Richard P. Feynman (1918–1988) was a prominent nuclear physicist who worked on the first atomic bomb at the Los Alamos National Laboratory. Far from being a dry “computer-brain” type, Feynman was a flamboyant practical joker, juggler, and showoff who loved all of life. Many of his colleagues had been frustrated by the complex mathematics needed to predict the interaction of subatomic particles. Feynman developed an intuitive method that is in use to the present day. His little “back-of-the-napkin” diagrams, which are called Feynman diagrams, are a way to represent particle interactions visually. By themselves, the diagrams do not prove anything. However, they permit scientists to think about particle interactions in an intuitive way, often predicting the correct results by seeing their underlying simplicity and elegance. A predicted result can then be checked out, both mathematically and by experiment.

A final issue is the way science views “authority” in the intellectual sense of the word. Any good scientist knows that scientific authority must be earned by lengthy investigation and experiment, and by achieving wide consensus. The authority of a theory grows by degrees as more scientists find that the explanation withstands great scrutiny and can be used to get practical results. Even then, it’s almost never absolute. The brilliant theories of Sir Isaac Newton served for centuries as an accurate description of the world around us. They have allowed the development of wondrous technologies that have bettered human lives and advanced the race. However, scientists today realize that Newton’s theories – called classical mechanics – are just a practical approximation of the way things really work. They are quite adequate for development of the earlier washing machines, automobiles, and airplanes. Nevertheless, they break down when studying the behavior of atoms and their smaller components. This behavior is explained by quantum mechanics, which is required to develop the simplest electronic pocket calculator. Good science, therefore, avoids taking even itself too seriously. The purpose of science is to use mental skill and creativity to better human life. In this spirit, there never is an end to the process. Today’s wonderful, practical theory will inevitably give way to tomorrow’s underlying theory that explains even more, and that can get results that are still more marvelous.

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How, then, may this nebulous thing called spirit be investigated in a scientific manner? First, we would maintain a healthy skepticism of explanations that sound corny or contrived. However, we would not rule out anything, within reason, until it has been disproved. Laboratory measurements and mathematics may be useful at some point, but it will take some additional pioneering before meters and instruments can measure such things as telepathy and mind-over-matter. The importance of the intuition in spiritual study is very great, and the quest for elegance can help avoid flat-Earth explanations. In particular, one would expect to find similarities in spiritual and material processes, and even to discover mechanisms that tie the two together. Practical experiment is an essential part of any science if it is to be more than an empty mental exercise. Spiritual science is no exception. After considering any line of scientific spiritual theories, one should find ways to use them to get practical results in one's life. Results make the theory real and alive, and show that it has validity.

Authority is the issue that gets a bit touchy. As we have seen, good science builds authority slowly by experiment and consensus; and it never becomes absolute. There have been eras and cultures, notably the ancient Greece of Plato, in which scholars did not separate the universe into material vs. spiritual. Scientific attitudes prevailed in all matters, including philosophy and theology. But the first two millennia *Anno Domini* – coinciding approximately with the Piscean Age – have been the world's most abominable and embarrassing period for spiritual science. This plunge into the dark side of consciousness, and its very long persistence, have two causes: power and fear. Kings and clergy alike have had vested interests in controlling the minds and souls of their subjects and followers. Debate was something that occurred in seminaries and monasteries. In dealing with public, many leaders have preferred to descend the mountain with stone tablets bearing God's Law. And because fear of physical punishment, alone, is often less than effective, the ultimate psychological barbarity is an instilled fear for one's eternal hereafter if one's faith is lacking, deviant, or even questioning. This kind of fear-based faith is self-propagating. Clergy and laity who have been so-indoctrinated feel that it is their duty to pass along this fear, for the sake of all those under their influence.

Such sacred duty can even mandate the unprovoked use of force. The fabled Crusades were an attempt by Christian Europe to force its faith upon cultures of the Middle East that had faiths of their own. There was no thought of sitting down to a friendly debate. The pattern has persisted to the present day, although it seems that the shoe is on the other foot! While the scientists of many cultures are among the most willing to share useful knowledge, religious wars and acts of terrorism are still very much alive and well. The Inquisition saw torture and fiery death applied to many who had minds of their own. The medieval astronomer Galileo Galilei, after concluding that the Earth revolves around the Sun, was forced by the Church to recant his teachings. Even then, he was sent into exile for years.

The foregoing history leads to a great irony for those who have eyes to see it. On one hand, scientific astronomy is well accepted today by virtually everyone, including the staunchest of religious conservatives. The latter would be mortified if the public schools taught flat-Earth theories to their children. On the other hand, many of these same conservatives adhere to the biblical seven-day Creation story, and are firmly convinced that human evolution never occurred. They do so, despite the fact that evidence in the fossil record supporting evolution – aside from a few technical fine points that are still open to question – is as objective and compelling as is the evidence for modern astronomical theory. Figure! A little insight into human nature, however, may explain the survival of such illogic. Many evolutionists, like many scientists in all fields, are atheistic materialists in their private beliefs, even if they are not vocal about it. They not only

disbelieve in any kind of God or spiritual Creator, but believe that humankind is just an interesting and accidental chemical reaction. The world of spirit, as they see it, is all in our heads! There is no middle ground for these two camps. They adhere to extremes because they are terrified of each other's extremism.

Religion should be the invigorating influence that helps us to know who we are, and our missions in time and eternity. Religion should stimulate interest in science – including spiritual science – as encouragement to take human and spiritual achievement to the maximum. Even fear can be a healthy part of science, and can be one motivation for achievement. Fear of ignorance, bigotry, and natural disasters can prompt us to use our minds and abilities to improve our culture and environment. Being competent makes us happier, builds our self-esteem, and increases our power and freedom. But when fear is paralyzing to the intellect, it has the opposite effects. It creates a blind gullibility that accepts authority without question – a prime violation of scientific method.

What might be referred to as "religions-of-fear" are the classic enemies of all science – and especially spiritual science. Nevertheless, religions have served, and continue to serve, an important and noble purpose that 20th century science abandoned. Even with some deficiencies and anti-scientific attitudes, there is much wisdom and metaphorical truth in their spiritual doctrines. They have encouraged morality, self-discipline, and humanitarian motives that have maintained order in a confused world. This order, in turn, has paved the way for all human accomplishments – including science. But modern science is just as guilty of deficiencies as is traditional religion. Its fundamental error is blind skepticism toward the spiritual – a prime violation of scientific method. Believing that "classical materialism" is the whole picture, the scientific community has failed to take the "quantum leap" into the larger reality in which the material world is just a part of the spiritual. When one believes that human intelligence is only a clever chemical reaction, moral and ethical implications are quite different than for a community of immortal spiritual beings. By wholly repudiating the spiritual world order that facilitated its own development, science is shooting itself in the foot. If that religious order were utterly eliminated – without a substantial, new spiritual order to replace it – then science would degenerate, along with the civilization, first into liberal "political correctness" and then into chaos. And it appears that we are well on our way!

Science and religion will achieve considerable unification in the 21st century CE, or humanity will fall apart at its seams. In either case, America will lead the way. One honest look around at the state of national and world affairs will convince a sensible person that the current order – like the Roman Empire before it – is about to become history.

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There is potential, nonetheless, for happy endings. You can be a part of the very effort that will produce a positive outcome. Spiritual self-knowledge awakens powers that you've never dreamed of. You'll naturally want to help others achieve the same. Life as an infinite spiritual being in a world full of humans is just too darned lonely! Even on the way up, the subject of metaphysics – as you're soon to discover – can be a great deal of fun. Which is the way life can and should be for a civilization of enlightened immortals. If it takes a little effort to steer this old world onto its rightful course back to eternity, then consider yourself a pioneer and prepare for a first class adventure.

Of course, if there are some who feel that it is in their best interest to remain human, we'll understand. You may leave your helmet on the rack and exit via the side door. We've enjoyed making your acquaintance, and hope that you may decide to join us on a later trip. For the rest of

us, it’s on through the blue door to the launch pad.

These seat belts are just to get us safely off the ground. Soon you’ll find yourself lighter than any feather, and no longer bound to any ball of dirt. Does the acceleration make you feel anxious as to what lies ahead? I will admit that even though I’ve made the trip many times now, this blastoff through the stratosphere never gets old, and just brings out the big kid in me. If your first trip up makes you feel a little queasy, then rest assured that it happens to the best of us. We’ve been pretending that we’re “only human” for so long that we’ve almost begun to believe it!

Chapter 3

Mission Across Lifetimes – A Glimpse Behind the Veil

Free of Earth's gravitational field, the ship is on course to planet Mars – our first stop. On each of a few planets we'll be visiting, we will have the opportunity to examine some key areas of spiritual science. Traveling phases like this one provide an opportunity to do some cosmic sightseeing; and also time for me to share some basic metaphysical concepts with you that will become more meaningful as the interplanetary trek progresses. The familiar old Moon up ahead is larger and brighter than ever, as we pass near it. Reflecting a softer, ethereal version of the Sun's light, it has inspired romance and occult legend for as long as our race has gazed at its aura and basked in its magic. If one moon is enough to fuel all this mischief, our first couple of planetary stops may be especially interesting. Mars has two moons, and our second stop – Jupiter – has more than 60 that have been identified.

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Regarding "occult legend" I want to clarify the relationship between the words "occult" and "metaphysics." To many people, "occult" has some shady connotations. For example, it may refer to the holding of séances to attempt contact with the dead. That practice is often viewed with skepticism by many practitioners of higher metaphysics. Some feel it may be fraudulent, or a kind of self-deception that does not really contact the departed soul. Likewise, the ancient practices of summoning up "demons" to grant favors or to attack one's enemies are viewed as digging around in the shadowy garbage dumps of lower consciousness. Most such tinkering is, in my opinion, more psychological than spiritual. Higher metaphysical work betters humankind by increasing spiritual awareness and ability. Nevertheless, the word "occult" often is used as a synonym for metaphysics. Some of the best metaphysical work of the last two centuries was done by authors and spiritualists who referred to themselves as "occultists." We'll be examining a little of their work during the voyage. After all, it's much easier to say "occultist" than "practitioner of metaphysics." In its pure and proper form, the occult refers to anything that is "occluded" – or not easily seen.

Metaphysical work is about regaining the abilities that are rightfully ours, and restoring light and vision to those areas into which darkness and ignorance have entered. All science that ever has existed is a study of the occult. If mankind never had looked into the inner workings behind the surface appearances of the world, we would still be climbing trees or chasing animals to provide the evening's supper. It is by virtue of studying these occluded features of nature, and learning to harness their hidden powers, that we have warm homes, automobiles, and computers. All these would be "magic" to members of some past cultures. Those afraid of witchcraft could have burned someone for possessing a flashlight. They would have done so, not out of malice, but out of ignorance and fear of the unknown – which is the sole reason that some today who consider themselves "spiritual" would condemn legitimate metaphysics.

Of all well-known metaphysical subjects, reincarnation is among the most controversial. Many on Earth swear by it and claim to have extensive past-life recall. Others are skeptical. If reincarnation is true, then why don't more humans recall at least some of their past existences? A hint can come from examining the familiar processes of sleeping and dreaming. When you're asleep and involved in some dream-adventure, the chances are that you aren't recalling other

unrelated dreams. Also, you're probably not even aware that you're asleep. The term "lucid dreaming" applies to the occasional situation in which you're aware that you're asleep and dreaming. It's a higher state of awareness – between being asleep while not knowing it, and being awake. Dreaming sleep is a good analogy for understanding the reincarnation process. When each of us is physically awake, we nevertheless are living a kind of sleeping dream referred to as a human lifetime. A major difference between these two types of dreams is that the spiritual dream is shared with the countless other spirits who also live in the physical plane. Moving from one lifetime to another is very much like moving from one dream to the next – recalling none of the earlier dreams, let alone recalling ever having been Awake. Your metaphysical interest, however, may enable you to become a kind of "spiritual lucid dreamer" – not only recalling a few of those life-dreams lying earlier in time, but even recalling your true waking Self, who happens to be timeless!

The term "Higher Self" refers to the one true spiritual You, who not only is, but always was and always will be. The "ego," or lower self, is who each of us comes to believe that he or she is, during the course of a typical lifetime. Appearance, personality traits, talents, careers, race, national origin, and social and financial status are all factors that contribute to the ego image. The Higher Self is hidden from view, just as our waking self is hidden when we're dreaming. Nevertheless, the Higher Self is steering the overall course of our lives, though most humans are unaware that this intervention is occurring. History is rich with a certain type of "miracle" in which something invisible seems to reach down and protect people in crisis situations. Something distracts us, and we stop just before walking under the falling scaffold. A negative feeling keeps us from going into a particular restaurant, which was soon robbed as we read in the next day's paper. Occasionally, even the laws of physics seem to be suspended. A car goes off a cliff, but lands with much less impact than nature would dictate, and the driver emerges intact. Such experiences have led to the idea that each human may have a "guardian angel" who protects him or her.

All who travel the Path to spiritual enlightenment for very long come to appreciate how their lives have been overseen by this eternal component of their *own* consciousness. As awareness increases, the partnership becomes even more active, since these two components of the personality are becoming one. We begin to take our old ego image less seriously, and bring it into conformity with our eternal personality. As simple as this sounds, it is the principal secret of attaining all legitimate and responsible spiritual power. During phases of our lives when we feel powerless, it is often the case that our Higher Self is trying to lead us in a needful direction, to accomplish our higher life mission; while our ego – out of touch with that mission – gets dragged along kicking and screaming. The more we become aware of our true mission, the more we competently and happily achieve it.

We'll revisit the issues of spiritual sleep and waking during later phases of our journey. But with Mars still being a little way off, there is time for something I think you'll find quite entertaining: two real-life ghost stories. Now by "ghosts" I'm not referring to "haunts" that hang around graveyards or old houses. Haunts occasionally might be troubled beings caught between lifetimes. But more often, they are just "after-images" in the fabric of consciousness, in areas in which turmoil has occurred. The ghosts I'll be describing are human spirits who have just disconnected from their deceased bodies. The first of these two ghosts is, in fact, "yours truly," just after the end of my last lifetime.

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The earliest hint came when I was a child. A vivid and pleasant dream caught my attention

and curiosity, and even recurred three or four times. In this dream I was in the back yard where I lived, but it was nighttime. I saw the full, white Moon in the sky, but there were two Moons at once – the second larger and bright orange. The night air seemed fresh with the scent of foliage. However, perhaps most remarkable was the feeling that everything was very peaceful, tranquil, and even a bit magic. I felt a definite affinity for the experience, and would think about it at length in the morning after awakening. Another curious feature was a "word" that came to me. While the setting was in my yard, I felt that I was experiencing a special "place" and that it was called "Ijmuden." I didn't recall hearing a word even resembling that one during my current lifetime, so it remained a curiosity over the years.

The key to unraveling the dream came many years later, after metaphysical efforts had enabled me to recall fragments of a number of past lifetimes. Past-life recall is a bit like getting olives out of a jar. The first few memories are the hardest to pry loose; but after a while they come much more easily, and sometimes spontaneously. One day while going about my business, I mused that I never had remembered anything about the last previous lifetime. I presumed that this was because it was not very significant, and so it just had not come up in previous meditations. But over the next day or so, the pieces began floating in, in a light reverie, as I went about my other affairs.

It was a short lifetime, ending when I was around age 20. That was all in the plan. It was a kind of "fill-in" lifetime. My Higher Self knew it was important that I begin the next lifetime in the late 1940s, so that I could be synchronized with certain key individuals to whom I'm connected. My conscious ego had no hint of this. There have been many points along the time track at which I've had much more spiritual awareness. This tends to occur when a being has something important to accomplish. But since this last lifetime was mostly for thumb-twiddling, I had sunk to the lowest depths of spiritual awareness, short of being criminal. When people are spiritually asleep, they often tend to display hints of their higher interests and responsibilities, but all inverted and out of focus to the point of being comical. I did have an active spiritual interest of sorts, but entirely in the context of a small fundamentalist Christian congregation. Their activities involved displays of morbid to gleeful emotion, coupled with a great fear for the eternity of anyone who did not adhere to their rather rigid code of morality.

In setting up my destiny, my Higher Self was not at all concerned with waking up my ego, but just conveniently arranged for me to be inducted into the military during the throes of World War II. Now it seems logical that kicking the bucket when my time came shouldn't have been very difficult, with my being squarely in harm's way. However, since my human ego had not been let in on the plan, it was being most uncooperative and was rather hell-bent on survival. The latter I accomplished by saying "Yes Sir" as often as needed, and by managing not to offend anyone. When on the battlefield, somewhere in the northern European theater, I gave much higher priority to ducking into effective cover than to altering the anatomy of enemy soldiers. This tactic worked for a while. After a major skirmish I found myself alone with only one surviving fellow soldier – a tough guy who did not hold me in great esteem – while the bodies of a number of departed lay strewn about. The two of us stood surveying the smoke and the carnage. We had just slipped through the jaws of hell, physically unscathed but emotionally battered. Having reached his stress limit for the day, the other soldier got out a cigarette and proceeded to light up. Now, while I was elated at his physical good fortune, as well as my own, his last action caused me to have some concern for his immortal soul. At least I'd been taught that I should care, and should do my best to help. This was where my Higher Self got my ego to cooperate, even if unwittingly. I don't remember the exact words in which I enlightened my

comrade, or even in what language they were spoken. However, the gist was quite clear: “If God had wanted you to smoke, He’d have given you a chimney!”

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Buying the Farm becomes a much easier task when you have a bayonet protruding through your midsection. After a period of unconsciousness, I found myself alone after dark. The full Moon had emerged just over the horizon and, as is often the case, appeared larger and more orange than it would when higher in the heavens. However, the color was even more intense than at any time I could recall. It seems that perception through my astral body, which was almost weightless, was even better than when peering through all that clunkier stuff – and I didn’t even need my glasses. I could sense the night mist and the pleasant odor of the surrounding foliage. Everything seemed “very peaceful, tranquil, and even a bit magic” – identical to the feeling in my dream. I felt released from the stress of that short lifetime. It was *over*! There were also amazement and curiosity, but no hint of fear or apprehension.

Sometime later, even the word “Ijmuden” was clarified. Upon reading a newspaper article mentioning the town of Nijmegen in the Netherlands, I knew I was on the right track, as the word from my dream was probably a Dutch town with a similar spelling. The Netherlands is in the general area of northern Europe that I had pictured in my reverie, and was a theater of action between the Allies and the Germans during World War II. Research on the Web told me that a harbor town called “IJmuiden” (EYE·my·den) – almost the spelling that I recalled – is located near Amsterdam. Nijmegen had been occupied by the Germans and was the scene of some skirmishes, while IJmuiden may have been the site of Allied landings.

This anecdote should make graphic the old adage that the divine works in mysterious ways. Our Higher Selves have long been executing collective plans that have involved, at least temporarily, keeping our human egos in the dark. However, at certain key times in history, the reuniting of these two components of our consciousness – the eternal and the temporal – is all in the plans.

Incidentally, the term “astral body” does not refer to some star-studded robe worn by souls in the hereafter, but to a kind of after-image of one’s body which one tends to carry along for a little while after discarnating. There are a number of planes of existence, from the very rarefied spiritual plane down through the very solid physical. The astral plane is a stratum of dense mental and psychic energy lying just above the physical. It includes sexual energy, which is involved in generating new physical bodies. On ending a lifetime, beings usually have the impression of still having a body, although it may feel incredibly light. They perceive the environment as if sensing it through this vaporous copy of the body they just discarded. After some time, it is said, the astral body disintegrates as well; and the spirit eventually may be drawn to a new incarnation.

Now even for those who don’t question my sincerity, there is plenty of room for doubt among those skeptical of reincarnation. After all, my childhood dream may have been just that; and the later reverie could be written off as a combination of rationalization and self-deception. The best response to those who remain unconvinced is my second ghost story. While similar in many respects, it involves long-distance telepathy and observation by others, and so is not as easy to explain away.

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As a preschool child, I accompanied my parents on a few visits to an aging family friend, who I’ll refer to as Mrs. McCorkle (not her real name). Sitting in the living room of an elderly woman was not a very memorable experience for a little boy. However, she was a sweet lady and

took a liking to me. Therefore, some degree of emotional tie was formed. But around the time I entered school my visits with her ended, and therefore I had forgotten about her for many years.

Then one summer, when college age, I attended a camp session two hundred miles from home, conducted by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). This was a year or two before I was introduced to metaphysical studies, and so I was not accustomed to thinking along such lines. One night while sleeping in a bunk in a log cabin, I had a dream that lasted only about five seconds, and then I awakened. In the dream, I was viewing the interior of Mrs. McCorkle's bedroom. Peculiarly – especially for a very old woman – she was standing erect in the middle of her bed. She appeared to be fully clothed, but in her stocking feet. While she said nothing, I sensed her thoughts and perceptions. Her body was as light as a feather, so her acrobatics were no difficulty. Some years earlier, my parents had told me that she had lost most of her eyesight. However, in this vision, her eyes were wide-open with amazement, and her facial expression indicated pleasure. She was looking around the room and thinking, "I can see!"

On waking I looked at my watch and saw that it was around 3:00 a.m. Brushing the dream off as silliness, I turned over and went back to sleep, forgetting all about it. Several days later, I was back from camp and was having supper with my parents. My father asked if I remembered old Mrs. McCorkle. When I said that I did, he told me that she had passed away a few days earlier. I pinned him down regarding the exact date and circumstances. As no surprise, she was found in her bed the morning after the night of my dream. I saw no body lying on her bed, because I was picking up more on her astral perceptions than on the physical. What had looked to me like daytime clothing was probably the way she was most accustomed to envisioning herself.

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While the foregoing tales may give goose bumps to some of you first-time astronauts, frankly I find it all more fun than Halloween. When you've begun to open your spiritual eyes and see things as they Are, real life beats the heck out of fiction, any day, night, or eternity. We can continue our social visit later during the journey, but now is the time for a change of pace. With Mars looming up on the viewer screen, it's time to secure into our seats once again, and prepare to land for our first tour of a different world.

Chapter 4

The Spiritual Science of Hermes Trismégistus

With the thruster engines winding down, we've completed a smooth landing on the surface of the Red Planet, an orb barren of physical life as we know it. The two satellites we passed are Phobos and Deimos. Before we few human pioneers began trekking up, Mars's two moons were reserved, at best, for the astral eyes of any discarnate spirits that ventured into the vicinity. The planet's wispy atmosphere cannot support the life of humans without survival gear. The many canals that score its surface are intriguing to Earthlings, since all water on the planet's surface is frozen or vaporous. Yet, for its many differences, Mars is the most Earth-like body in the solar system, and is the most ideal planet for human survival away from home. Earth's orbit being the third from the Sun, that of Mars is only the fourth. It is a far cry from Venus, the second planet, with its sulfuric acid clouds and scorching surface temperatures. As we now descend the ramp onto the rocky soil, the friendliness of this foreign world, along with its differences, creates a real opportunity for us as scientists. While we are observing these unfamiliar features, we may, in the process, learn much about our home planet. What one world makes obvious may only be hidden within the other.

On that note, I would like to introduce you to our Martian hosts who are standing right in front of us. They don't have physical bodies, but as you develop your intuitive eyes you'll become able to discern spiritual beings. They are advanced souls who migrated to this planet centuries ago, after outgrowing the need for bodies. They'll communicate with us by telepathy. Of course I'll volunteer to translate, since most of you are still a bit green in that department as well. In any event, these friendly beings can contribute greatly to our scientific understanding of both the material and the spiritual. They have developed abilities to see right through solid matter, and to peer into the depths of the soul. Learn well their teachings, as their wisdom is the basis of much of the X-ray vision and related abilities that you may begin to develop even before our return to Earth. Their powers are every bit as valid on Earth as they are on Mars. As a matter of fact, Earth is where they were developed, a couple of millennia or so into the past. As we now sit before our hosts, what follows is their story, which they are always eager to share with all sincere seekers of higher wisdom.

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The early roots of Hermetic wisdom trace back to ancient Greece and the writings of the philosopher Plato (c. 428–347 BCE), a student of Socrates. Plato was a scholar of philosophy, science, and spirit. In contrast to the ways of the 20th century, from which we recently emerged, the ancients did not tend to divide subjects such as these into separate compartments. They believed that to understand any one of these it is necessary to understand the others as well, and how they relate. Their thinking was "holistic" long before we moderns coined the term. Plato speculated that the acquisition of knowledge is a kind of "recollection." At first, new information may only be words. However, when these result in understanding, it is as if a light just turned on – or more precisely, turned *back* on. Knowledge always was. It is a function of a universal Mind. Yet we, ourselves, are Mind. As such, we always have been and always will be. We've always had at least the potential to know any knowledge there is to know. Therefore, the acquisition of knowledge by humans is, in principle, a regaining of awareness that always has been rightfully

ours; and which we, even as individuals, may once have known.

An aspect of Platonic philosophy involves "archetypes," which are descriptions of knowledge or ideas that precede physical creation. To illustrate, consider a very simple and familiar geometric object – an equilateral triangle. Children only a few years into their education know well the characteristics of this mathematical object. It has three straight sides, all of the same length. The three sides are joined at points, forming three equal angles. It is quite easy to picture in one's mind. However, it is ironic that no one, from the beginning of time, has ever seen, drawn, or created a perfect triangle in the physical universe. Even the atoms that make up all physical objects are little vibrating, wavy particles that couldn't form solid lines or perfect points. An object or drawing approximating a triangle suggests the mental object to us, but the perfect archetype exists only in Mind.

During the 4th century BCE, under the empire of Alexander the Great, many of Greek descent settled in surrounding lands, including Egypt. This was the beginning of the period referred to as Hellenistic culture, lasting through the late 1st century BCE. The ethnic Greeks living in Egypt preserved the philosophical concepts of Plato and other Greek scholars in their way of viewing and analyzing the world. However, they became fascinated with many of the spiritual concepts found in Egyptian religion, and proceeded to synthesize the two philosophies. This was the beginning of what came to be called Hermetic thought. Hermes Trismégistus (in Greek, Ἑρμης Τρισμέγιστος), meaning "Hermes Thrice Great," was the legendary spiritual teacher of the Greek Egyptians, and was the alleged author of many of their currently known writings dating as early as 200 BCE. The term "Hermetic" refers to this teacher. In actual fact, he may never have existed. It was common in that era for scholars to ghost-write their philosophical and religious ideas, and then to attribute them to a legendary leader. Since legends often inflate, it should be no surprise that some very probable misinformation places Hermes as a contemporary of Moses, thousands of years earlier. Some writings attributed to Hermes Trismégistus may have been composed as late as the 10th century CE. Nevertheless, this body of thought was the basis for spiritual philosophy so profound that it has been an essential part of all serious Western metaphysical work for more than two millennia. Hermetists developed language and concepts that described the spiritual in better scientific terms than any movement that preceded it.

The bedrock concept of Hermetism is the "All." Most religions acknowledge some form of supreme intelligence believed to precede and generate all of creation – including the physical universe, nature, and human culture. The All, which is also referred to as the "All in One," is an excellent descriptive term for such an intelligent force. This is Spirit in its most unified and basic state, standing apart from all the active and changeable aspects of creation. To the Hermetists, the word Mind was synonymous with the All. This reflected Plato's concept of a Mind containing all basic ideas as archetypes, before any were physically created. The word "God" and close variants are nominally the equivalent of the All. However, these terms often tend to personify the divine intelligence with attributes unique to their particular religion. The All lends itself to scientific thought, because it is more of an essential *description* of the divine than a personification. The following Hermetic principles amount to thoughtful observations, also in science-friendly terms, of how *creation* works.

The most famous single writing attributed to Hermes is a very short tract, only about a page in length, called the Emerald Tablet. Legend has it that his grave was opened, and that this tract was found in his hands – having been carved by him on a tablet of emerald. Legend aside, this tract includes the single, most-quoted Hermetic principle, often referred to as the Principle of Correspondence. A fair translation would be, "That which is below is like unto that which is

above, and that which is above is like unto that which is below." It is more often quoted, "As Above So Below." If this principle were rephrased in contemporary terms it might read, "Consciousness is consciousness, on whatever plane of existence it may be found." We can learn much about the highest levels of divine consciousness, or any lower level, from what we know of ourselves as humans, and vice versa. As Above So Below is a way of keeping our thinking holistic. This principle will be invoked often in the chapters ahead, in contexts that will make its usefulness and power more apparent.

The next principle of interest is the "transmutation" of things, often into their opposites. "Transmutation" is a familiar term of alchemy. For many, alchemy may signify only a dubious forerunner to chemistry, practiced during the Dark Ages, in which the wizard sometimes attempted to transmute base metals into gold. On the presumption that such attempts were generally fruitless, these medieval experimenters shared something in common with modern skeptics: a misunderstanding of the legitimate nature of real alchemy. Chemistry is indeed a part of alchemy, as compounds and elements are transmuted into other compounds every day, in refineries and laboratories. However, true alchemy is a science of anything that can be altered by degrees, or converted from one form to another, whether that thing might be physical, mental, or spiritual. Alchemy is a way of thinking about things to see their underlying mutable natures, and of becoming adept at converting them into the forms most desired. Hot and cold sound like two distinct and opposing qualities, but science has shown them to be relative degrees of the same thing – the vibrations of matter influenced by differing amounts of heat energy. An air conditioner makes a room cold by pumping some of the heat energy into the outdoors. The Hermetists were alchemists and viewed the physical universe in these terms. However, their true adepts were more focused upon mental and spiritual qualities. The transmutation of fear into courage is a good example. Such conversions have, of course, been accomplished by many wise teachers and sages who didn't regard themselves as alchemists. Nevertheless, an alchemical way of thinking is essential to a holistic spiritual science. Spirit may be far better understood using the same scientific concepts that modern man has been so adept at applying to the physical world. This last point, itself, is a good application of As Above So Below.

A principle related to transmutation might be called the "Hermetic Pendulum." Hermetists observed that Nature oscillates between opposing qualities over periods of time. Some oscillations are mechanical and familiar. Examples would be the fluctuation between day and night, and the climate changes through the annual seasons. Physical cycles of a less-understood nature are the alternation of global warming with ice ages, and the rare switch of magnetic polarity between the planet's polar regions. Many of these natural cycles are vital to earthly life. Some pendulum swings are less desirable. Modern psychology has identified the alternating mania and depression of individuals suffering from bipolar disorder. While the depression is paralyzing, the mania – even if energizing – can cause its victim to lose some touch with reality while on a "high" cycle. The objective of treatment would be to reduce the length of the pendulum swings, so that the individual operates in a viable range nearer the center. Psychiatry has identified physical factors that may cause this disorder, and often attempts to treat it with drugs. However, if non-physical factors such as past-life influences are the cause of these mood swings in some individuals, they may respond well to spiritual counseling and education.

There is a very interesting phenomenon on the social level that bears a haunting similarity to bipolar disorder. American public opinion and the country's political system, as well as those of other democratic nations, oscillate between poles referred to as the "Right" and the "Left." We elect a conservative president, and later a liberal one. Congress may undergo a similar

transmutation every few years. The reason that these happen is rooted in public frustration. However, are our national mood swings healthy, and are they converging on a solution? Perhaps we as a people could use a little spiritual enlightenment, to get to the bottom of our mood swings and leave our culture in a healthier state.

All of the Hermetic principles contribute to the development of spiritual X-ray vision, but the next one is even more graphic. The Hermetists viewed all of creation not as "solid" but as a sea of vibration. Perhaps the All, in its most transcendent state, is the only thing that really is still – or at least has no wavelength. In contrast, all that exists on the spiritual and material planes owes its very existence to its vibrational qualities. One could say that creation is an interacting set of vibrations within the cosmic Mind. Modern science has validated this point with regard to the material universe. What appear to be particles, including those that make up the components of atoms, are also known to behave as waves in certain laboratory experiments. Another development called superstring theory came to the fore in the late 20th century. According to this theory, all of matter is composed of very tiny vibrating strings called superstrings. In some versions of the theory, these strings are so small as to make an atom look as big as the solar system by comparison. While yet to be proved beyond doubt, superstring theory looks promising because it seems to be able to resolve a long-standing problem in physics. In their quest for simplicity and elegance, physicists have been unable to show the mathematical relationship between gravity and the other forces of nature, such as electromagnetism and radioactivity. Scientists have equations that describe all the other forces as different forms of the same force, that became distinct from each other as the early universe cooled. Superstring theory may integrate gravity with all the rest.

Many people are vaguely aware of psychic vibrations, and often refer to them in casual conversation. One scenario has occurred countless times, when people are trying out some new restaurant or store for the first time. On sensing a general sleaziness about the staff or patrons, one might say, "This place has bad vibes." The term "vibes" is not just a figure of speech. People tend to use it because they know, instinctively, that vibrations are what they are sensing, even if they haven't spent any time analyzing the issue. Those who have been indoctrinated into a scientific profession – particularly biology or psychology – are likely to rationalize that the people are just reacting to body language or facial expressions, and that any "vibrations" are in the heads of the perceivers. This is survival, of course, in the materialistic camp. It keeps these poor scientists from evoking ridicule from their colleagues. On the other hand, those who develop an active metaphysical interest cultivate and expand their innate spiritual abilities. For example, when driving in rush-hour traffic it is common for them to sense that they should change lanes, even in some instances in which theirs is moving fastest at the moment. I sometimes might miss on this one, but often am spot-on when I follow my impulses. I'm more likely to regret it if I get too logical, rather than follow my intuition when a strong impulse comes.

The Hermetic concept that all of creation is vibratory is probably the single most important thing that makes possible a merger of science with spiritual thought. Since science now views all aspects of physical existence in terms of vibration, seeing the supernatural planes in similar terms shows the holistic elegance of a single system of grand magnitude. Again, As Above So Below hits the mark.

It would be erroneous to portray the early Hermetists as a single, coherent group of eminent spiritual scientists. The entire body of Hermetic literature, as developed through the first few centuries CE, was quite diverse. One branch was religious, sharing much with Judaism and early

Christianity. Another segment was devoted to ceremonial magic. But it is their contributions to spiritual science that continue to inspire, and that are as pertinent today as they were when first conceived. Versions of the Hermetic principles discussed in this chapter are seen throughout many works of Western metaphysical literature. However, there is a well-known book, *The Kybalion*[1], that gives a good rendering of these principles and a few others. Bound copies may be available through bookstores, but certain websites offer it as a free download. (For further information, see appendix E – Websites of Interest.)

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I hope you have enjoyed visiting these ethereal descendants of one of ancient Earth's more interesting cultures, and having them share their wisdom with us. However, time grows near for the next leg of our spiritual space journey. Secured once again into our seats we lift off, heading straight through the Asteroid Belt on a course toward Jupiter.

[1]. Three Initiates, *The Kybalion* (Chicago: Yogi Publication Society, 1912).

Chapter 5

Reassembling the Pieces

The Asteroids – these large chunks of rock and debris our ship is passing – form a belt around the Sun, part way between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter. Some scientists believe they may be the remnants of a planet that was destroyed by a collision with another large object in the distant past. Astronomers may observe the Asteroids through their telescopes, and proceed to learn more about the nature of the ancient, unified world from which they originated. This theory sets the tone for our metaphysical discussion while on our way to Jupiter. During the science briefing in chapter 2 we discussed the problem of religion being fragmented, both from metaphysical knowledge and from the physical sciences. While visiting the Hermetic spirits on Mars we learned that knowledge is *regained*, rather than just gained, in a process of reuniting with a Universal Mind. We now may begin to sift through the fragments of spiritual knowledge that are our heritage, and proceed to reconstruct some parts of the magnificent whole which they constituted a very long time ago.

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Christianity and Judaism teach personal immortality of sorts, though it's not usually referred to in those terms. Both teach that one will exist forever, whether in an opulent heaven or in less-comfortable digs. While physical creation is discussed, the creation of spiritual beings is not explicitly addressed – at least in the primary scriptures. However, it stands against reason that an immortal consciousness that never will cease to exist ever could have been created, or have been non-existent. Traditional Western religions, then, imply that we all are immortal beings, though the scriptures treat this matter rather cryptically. Mention of reincarnation is almost absent, though not denied.

To understand spiritual sleep and life-dreams, it will be helpful to search for reasons why Creation occurred in the first place. The aphorism As Above So Below, which we learned from the Hermetists, gives us the best clue as to where we should look first. Why do human spirits spend hours at a computer playing video games? Why do they work puzzles, or play card games such as solitaire? What motivates scientists and inventers to spend many decades of their lives on impassioned quests for knowledge and innovation? Reasonable answers to all these questions might be boredom, curiosity, and the creative impulse. If consciousness Above is a lot like consciousness Below, does this not suggest probable motivations for cosmic creation? Picture a unified, all-powerful, divine consciousness, capable of creating anything, but with no toys – not even a game board or a tennis court. Tic-tac-toe, checkers, chess, or Dungeons and Dragons would be mastered by such a consciousness in a cosmic nanosecond. The best cure for divine thumb twiddling would be a game of almost unthinkable duration and complexity, without all the details of this game even being established at the outset. It would do well to include fascinating video and audio, plus countless other possible sensations and perceptions. Rewards and penalties such as pleasure and pain would help to dispel eternal boredom, and often would signal degrees of competent or incompetent play.

Perhaps most important, it should appear to this divine consciousness – or at least to those parts of it currently playing the game – that it is not possible to just get up and walk away from the game, at least without winning it first. The players would have to forget, temporarily, that

they are infinite and immortal beings. Knowing one's eternal roots would get in the way of Creation. It would allow one to see right through the illusions, even as the web is being spun. The Game of Life might best be understood as a cosmic-scale, holographic video game of almost infinite complexity. Its long-term purpose: to regain the truth behind more and more of its illusions, reconnecting at some point with the knowledge of one's immortal nature and identity. Eventually, one might rise above the Game altogether through team work, helping one's fellow beings to rise above it as well. This, then, would be *winning*.

Now technically speaking, when consciousness loses large portions of its awareness it would have placed itself into a "trance." There is hardly a more accurate word for this state. It amounts to a kind of divine self-hypnosis. It stands to reason, however, that divine consciousness would not want to remain in the Trance forever, so it would program itself to awaken at some point, or points, during the long Game. This leads to the issue of "divine will" or long-term intent. As distinct human beings playing the Game of Life together, we often have differing viewpoints and conflicts of interest. However, there is great ongoing agreement, at some deep level of our collective consciousness, regarding the character of the Game at different stages throughout time. The initial entry into the Trance, the progress of civilization through different eras, and any periods of true spiritual awakening all seem to be guided by an underlying intent – some basic programming of the Game. This leads us to the realization that the details of "divine will" change from era to era. Today's right is tomorrow's wrong. This point may be controversial, especially to the religious Right; but keeping it in mind can shed considerable light upon the Game of Life. However, it should be noted that this is *not* the same as the liberal assertion that right and wrong are just matters of personal viewpoint! "Evil" is acting seriously out of step with today's divine will – and yes, evil *does* exist.

Religious literature expresses a great deal of wisdom regarding the various stages of the Game of Life. The Fall from a state of grace is symbolized in the book of Genesis by the story of how Adam and Eve were ousted from the plush Garden, and have had a rougher time of it ever since. This story is an allegory expressing great truth, but it needs to be balanced with a more scientific explanation. The Trance and the Fall are two terms describing the same thing. Starting out in full, knowing connection to our infinite and immortal spiritual roots, we had available vast power and knowledge. On entering the Trance, as a necessary part of creation of the Game, we *forgot* our roots, and our basic nature and identity. Living throughout the ages in this alienated state we've had to get along by the sweat of our brows, as the Genesis story indicates.

The notion that Adam and Eve fell from grace by eating the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil is revealing if it is understood with wisdom. Unfortunately, it is one of the least-understood points in the literature of Western religion. As the story goes, the serpent enticed the couple to obtain the knowledge of good and evil, and therefore to be like God. What is so often misunderstood is that the tempter's assertion was a lie! Before the Fall, our divine consciousness was entirely God-like. On entering the Trance we were cast into an illusion of duality. There was the divine "up there," and suddenly we were not that. Assuming new identities and limitations, we were not worthy. Life was now hard, and we blamed ourselves – and each other – for our failures. Another common misunderstanding is the notion that God didn't expect the fruit to be eaten, and only cast the couple out of the Garden in anger. Truth returns with the realization that the Fall or Trance – whichever term you prefer – was all a part of the creative process, and was divine will from the beginning. The serpent in this allegory was acting as God's agent, since it was carrying out divine intent. Belief contrary to this point is a key part of the Trance's programming, designed to create a kind of cosmic guilt complex (i.e., Original Sin).

Sin usually is understood as destructive behavior resulting from a lack of spiritual enlightenment; but there is an enormous lack of agreement on what constitutes enlightenment, and on how to attain it. Western religion has offered mostly a cookbook list of things one must not be responsible for. It's okay, for example, to be responsible for the birth of another. Unless the birth occurs out of wedlock. It's not okay to kill another human. Except in cases of war or self-defense. It gets complicated, because the devout are not in agreement on all these exceptions. And then there's the death penalty and the abortion issue, which split the modern religious community right down the middle.

In contrast, the metaphysical tradition teaches that as the aspirant develops spiritually, he or she will come to know what is the right conduct for him or her, personally. Divine law, from this viewpoint, is not intended to punish man; but rather its principles are great tools of empowerment. For example, it helps to understand one's body and the principles of healthy living, so that one can improve the quality of life. In loftier matters, if one comes to know the main reasons he or she is here this lifetime, one can best obtain the power and resources needed to accomplish that mission. From this perspective, sin is incompetent living and is due to ignorance, which itself is a result of the Trance. It can result from shortsightedness – living for the moment – and from operating in a state of spiritual alienation from one's fellow beings. Living without regard for the rest of humanity is not wrong just because it's "inconsiderate." All of us are spiritually interconnected, and some of us have very direct and personal lines of responsibility to each other. This cosmic video game of life is programmed as a team effort, just as a team climbs a mountain or launches a mission to the Moon. And death is no escape from responsibility for a life badly lived, since we come back over and over until we get it right!

Traditional moral teachings often represent good sense. Children are better off being born in wedlock; and killing, with a few justifiable exceptions, breeds social chaos. However, the Western world is at a crossroads as the authoritarian approach is failing. Living in the Trance throughout history, mankind has been much like a society of children who needed to be told not to run out into the street. With spiritual puberty at hand it's time to take on higher and bolder purposes, relying on our maturing understanding to know when it is – and is not – appropriate to cross that street. Higher Morality cannot be written down in the Bible, the Torah, or any other book. Its knowledge comes exclusively from ongoing personal experience, insight, and awakening. Our wisdom may be imperfect; but we must be free to act, and to experience the consequences of our actions. The more-enlightening studies can give us that freedom, and bolster our wisdom at the same time. By reuniting metaphysics and religion, we are evaporating major areas of the Trance.

"Karma" is a word often heard in metaphysical circles, and is a term borrowed from the Hindu tradition. It refers to a kind of spiritual baggage an individual takes on, due, in part, to bungled living. It might be a traditional "sin" such as hurting another unjustifiably. However, it just as easily could be some failure to help mankind when a great opportunity arises, or even the botching of one's entire rightful mission in a specific lifetime. Karma is both understandable and expected within the Trance, but results in a kind of "minus points" that one needs to erase to get back to zero and above. It's just the way the cosmic video game is programmed. These negative points amount to sinking further into the Trance, and tend to give one a bumpier ride until handled. In practice, karma often refers to the spiritual baggage that one brings forth from past lifetimes without even being aware of it. Just knowing that it exists can help a great deal.

Sometimes life seems to go out of its way to give us a hard time, for no obvious reason. Someone who believes in only one lifetime might be saying, "Why is this happening to me?"

while tending to blame others for their troubles. Those with metaphysical training look for their personal responsibility whenever difficulties arise, and proceed to take steps to restore balance and harmony to those areas of their lives and consciousness. Not only does this often increase their success in dealing with the problem areas, but it raises their awareness and power levels in handling life in general. It leaves them less deeply mired in the Trance. And when any individual transcends any part of the Fallen State, the Trance is also reduced for the entire civilization, leaving that much less evil in the world.

In metaphysical circles, "the Great Work" refers to the process of reuniting with one's Higher Self; and, secondarily, to assisting others to do the same for themselves. If any of us were awakened from the Trance and were operating in the full consciousness of our Higher Selves, then we would be well aware of our place and function in the divine order of eternity. While walking still in the earthly realm, such an awakened being would be called an "Adept" of the highest order. This Adept would be able to promote healing and spread wisdom among others, so that they may carry on with the Great Work as well. It should come as no surprise that many metaphysical Christians refer to Jesus as being just such an Adept, based on their belief that he had that state of awareness. (I leave evaluation of the historical Jesus to the reader. However, the stories of him in the scriptures certainly portray an archetypal Adept.)

"Judge not, that you be not judged." (Matthew 7:1, Revised Standard Version.) These words of the mentioned Adept, while being some of his most famous, are also among his least understood and most misused advice. The problem may stem from a failure to contemplate the additional advice that followed: "First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye." (Mt 7:5.) It is sage advice to judge slowly and wisely. Immature criticism often will come right back in our faces, will damage our relationships with others, and can leave us with more karmic baggage. It also is advisable to hold yourself to a higher standard than the minimum you expect from others, and to cut others some slack – thus the log and the speck.

Judgment has been variously abused depending upon the era and culture. During the Spanish Inquisition it was the Church fathers who sought to gouge perceived logs from the eyes of others, despite the pitiful blindness of their own. Between that time and the 20th century, the Hermetic pendulum of Western culture swung hard from the Right to the Left. Hence, a modern abuse is "Don't judge me." In a sad but humorous example, a case came to my attention some decades ago, in which a woman working for a charitable organization had been pilfering the used clothing and goods that the organization distributed. When caught and questioned she told her supervisors that they should not judge her, because "It is not Christian to judge." A secular version of "Don't judge me" is seen in liberal attitudes originating in the 1960s. Many have used these attitudes to justify aberrant behavior and to destroy positive social values, often being supported by liberal courts. Dubious interpretation of the US Constitution, rather than of the Bible, has led to this travesty.

The Christian Right, however, often promotes destructive passivism by poor interpretation of the mentioned scripture. A young woman who sat with me on a jury for a murder trial told me afterward that it was her last time, because she "doesn't want to sit in judgment of others." Never mind that as a devout and moral person, she might have seen more clearly to remove some debris from the eye of another than might some juror of lesser character. So just how "asleep" does an infinite and immortal being have to be to think that he or she can slide out of responsibility by "leaving all judgment to God"? We are the channels of all that is divine within the material plane – including judgment, first and foremost. We acquire karmic penalties if we dodge our

responsibilities to our fellow man, including those situations in which our judgment is required. This gives a higher meaning to the saying, "You cannot escape Judgment." You always are better off to try. Admitting that you don't currently have the data or wisdom to make some specific judgment may be responsible, but you may be using good judgment in making that very decision. Wise judgment is like muscle building. Avoiding responsibility will let your spiritual muscles atrophy, while seeking wisdom and responsibility together will build them up. And heaven knows that if any place on Earth is in need of more responsible judgment, it is 21st century America!

A well-adjusted being has a natural love of spirit and humanity, because of their wonderful potentials. These include all that is beautiful, healthy, harmonious, ingenious, and creative. Nevertheless, this intrinsic love of Life by spirit need not include love of ugliness, degradation, or backward and malignant cultures about the globe. Any healthy and evolved culture that is to survive must know its unique values, and be willing to defend them at all costs. Anything less is cultural suicide.

Good balance is expressed in this condensed and paraphrased excerpt from Ecclesiastes:

> There is a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die; a time to kill and a time to heal; a time to love and a time to hate; a time for war and a time for peace. (Adapted from Eccl 3:1–8, RSV.)

The foregoing is not contradictory to Jesus's advice on judgment, but only to its popular misinterpretation. Even the idea of the "Last Judgment" bears a higher meaning for those with eyes to see and ears to hear. The Apocalyptic idea of souls awakening from the dead is symbolic of a mass awakening from the Trance. These souls are awakening not only to be Judged, but to Judge!

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Strong encouragement to "Use Your Judgment" is the most sage and timely single piece of advice that I can offer to aspiring spiritual astronauts. When trying out new powers back on Earth, it makes the difference between being a wimp and moving mountains – and even the difference between planetary salvation and chaos. If using your Judgment sounds like it will tax your wisdom to the limit, some valuable help in that department is at hand, with the largest planet in the solar system looming ahead in the viewer. During our visit to Jupiter we will have the opportunity to learn from one of the greatest traditions of spiritual wisdom known to the human race. With seat belts in place we now descend for an encounter with the Tree of Life. Its fruit can enable us to perform the Great Work – that lifelong challenge of reuniting with our Higher Selves – so that we can rediscover just how God-like we really are!

Chapter 6

Qabalah – a Map of Cosmic Consciousness

A direct landing on the Giant Planet is impossible, with violent storms forever at play over its gassy surface. Having put the craft down on Europa – a rocky, ice covered moon – we have an excellent view of Jupiter and a pleasant forum to learn from our Jovian hosts, who even now are wafting up from the planet to greet us. These advanced souls migrated here from Earth beginning in the first century CE. As their powerful spiritual tradition has flourished and evolved quietly, even to the present day, the ascent of these Adept spirits from our shared home planet continues to this very moment. If our Martian visit induced the beginnings of X-ray vision, the powers that may be gained from our current hosts are a thousand times greater. Mastery of the tools they provide can enable us to see our eternal and immortal roots in a graphic manner, to comprehend the spiritual underworkings of our society and the human race, and even to grasp our connection with the very cosmos. Placing our Mars-trained minds, now, into a meditative state will allow us to receive the telepathic message which they are gracious enough to share with us.

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The word Qabalah (also often spelled Kabbalah or Cabala in English; and spelled **קבל** or **קבלה** in variations of Hebrew, read right-to-left, like "kbl" or "kblh") literally means a "receipt" or something received. As it refers to an ancient body of religious mystical thought, the implication probably is that it was received from, or revealed by, divinity. The tradition was born from the quest of ancient Jewish scholars to develop a better understanding of the divine, and of man's relationship with the divine, by applying scientific methods of thought and analysis. The Qabalist tradition, like the Hermetic tradition, is very metaphysical. These two traditions influenced each other early on, and together form the basis for most Western metaphysical thought. The earliest known written Qabalist work is the Sepher Yetzirah, meaning Book of Formation. It is thought to have been put into written form around the first century CE. The other most famous work of Qabalah is the Sepher haZohar, or Book of Splendor. The Zohar is thought to have been written in the Middle Ages by Spanish Qabalists. Countless books on Qabalah have been written by Jewish and non-Jewish scholars alike, and date to modern times. However, by the time the Zohar was written the subject was well evolved; and the Sepher Yetzirah and Zohar form a solid basis for Qabalist thought, to the present day. Apart from that foundation, the contributions, over the last few centuries, of non-Jewish occultists and mystics have been formidable. These have included associations with Astrology and Tarot, and some connections with Christianity, Hinduism, and other religions. This expanded body of Qabalah-based metaphysical thought is referred to as the Western Mystery Tradition.

Qabalah is analogous to the study of human biology to become a competent medical doctor. Hermetic and Qabalist teachings provide insight into the inner workings of the human spirit. Sufficient practice and wisdom can make their Adepts able to heal the ills of mankind, and to move mountains in terms of human and spiritual accomplishment. However, if Hermetic doctrine could be compared to a Master's thesis, then Qabalah could be said to be Ph.D. material. It should not be too surprising, then, that the study of Qabalah involves learning a few technical terms brought forward from Hebrew. A medical doctor uses Latin terms to be very precise in diagnosis and record keeping. For example, "sinusitis" is a term that distinguishes one type of

runny nose from types with other causes, and which may require different treatments. The Hebrew terms introduced in this chapter maintain more precise meanings than if their English translations were substituted. Fortunately, there are only around twenty needed to grasp the basics. So learn them well, and make them a prominent part of your expanding consciousness. These terms will enable you to pick up other books on Qabalah as you continue your studies, and navigate them with some ease. The pronunciations given are often used within Western metaphysical circles, but may deviate from those of modern Hebrew. The loftier concepts presented in this chapter run throughout many works of Qabalah and the Western Mystery Tradition. The humorous and less reverent remarks may be assumed to be my own.

"Ain" literally means "nothing." It is the Qabalist term for divine consciousness in its transcendent state – separate from Creation. Ain is the equivalent of the "All" as used by the Hermetists. Ain is the Absolute, or the Absolute No-Thing, since it refers to the ultimate Creator – the Source of all else – itself never having been created. It might be envisioned as the Unity of all consciousness, in some ultimate state of bliss, knowing, but with no Creation about which to know. According to Qabalist tradition, as the Ain prepared to create, it first expanded itself infinitely, becoming Ain Soph (pronounced "sōfe"). The words Ain Soph mean "no end," and in Qabalah may be translated as the Endless. Next, Ain Soph filled itself with living light, and became Ain Soph Aur, or Endless Light. Ain Soph Aur might be envisioned as a vast heaven filled with a bright mist made up of particles of pure living consciousness.

It seems reasonable that if some parts of this infinite, dispersed consciousness wished to create anything, they might have to come together into some kind of focus, and assemble into some type of being, to become able to act as a Creator. Tradition has it that Ain Soph Aur contracted into a point, or sphere, of brilliant light. This white sphere is referred to in Qabalah as Kether, meaning the Crown. It is the first act of Being. Kether is also referred to as the Ancient of Days, and its intent is expressed in the words, I AM.

Kether, as focused eternal consciousness, created the primary framework for all else that exists by emanating ten additional spheres of consciousness, descending down the planes from pure spirit to the material world. These eleven conscious states are depicted in figure 6-1, a diagram known as the Tree of Life. It is an inverted tree, having its roots in Ain Soph Aur, the pure spiritual Ground of Being. In this analogy Kether is the trunk, and the ten additional spheres of consciousness are the branches. Each of the spheres is called a Sephirah (seh·FEER·ah), meaning a numbered thing, the plural being Sephiroth (seh·FEER·oth). The eleven Sephiroth are arranged into three columns, referred to as Pillars. The column to the reader's right is known as the Right Pillar of Mercy. It represents expanding, liberating, or dissolving processes. The opposite column is called the Left Pillar of Severity. It contains processes of contraction, restriction, or formation. The Middle Pillar is often called the Pillar of Equilibrium, as it represents balanced consciousness at several levels ranging from spirit to materiality. It is also called the Pillar of Consciousness to distinguish it from the two side columns, which are referred to as the Pillars of Function. The colors that the Western Mystery Tradition most often associates with each Sephirah are listed in the diagram.

< figure 6-1 about here, on even-numbered (verso) full page >

< figure 6-2 about here, on facing odd-numbered (recto) full page >

The eleven Sephiroth are also depicted as locations on an archetypal human form. This figure is referred to as Adam Kadmon, meaning Primordial Man, and is illustrated in figure 6-2. Readers who have participated in holistic healing arts such as Reiki may be familiar with "chakras" (a Hindu term), which are energy centers within the human body. The Sephiroth are a

similar set of energy centers, and some of them are identical in location to specific chakras. But whereas the chakras are centered vertically along the body's axis, some of the Sephiroth are located along the sides of the body, as well. When considered in conjunction with the Tree of Life, as a diagram of Creation at the cosmic level, Adam Kadmon is sometimes referred to as the Body of God. However, the Sephiroth are just as valid when considered relative to the body of each human being. This sheds an interesting perspective on the biblical assertion that humans are created in the image of the divine. The human body is much more than an accident of evolution. The human form is a small map of Creation. The energy centers of our bodies mirror corresponding focuses of consciousness at the cosmic level. This addresses the issue of creationism vs. evolution, as discussed in chapter 2. The creationists are right that the universe and all of life were consciously created, and are not accidents. However, the evolutionists are equally right in using the scientific method to show the historical process by which human life evolved. The sequence of animal life that preceded the human form shows how inert matter responds to the influence of Spirit, eventually to reflect in the microcosm of human life the grand idea or archetype that is expressed in the macrocosm of Adam Kadmon. Kether, the Crown Sephirah, is said to be above the head, representing pure spirit, whereas the other ten Sephiroth have specific locations within the body.

As Creation proceeded, the first Sephirah emanated by Kether is said to be Chokmah (HOKE·mah or CHOKE·mah, "ch" as in "loch"), meaning Wisdom. It sits at the top of the Pillar of Mercy and corresponds to the left side of the head. Its predecessor, Kether, represents divine consciousness at rest, its male and female aspects unified and in perfect equilibrium. Kether takes the first step of Creation by conceiving an idea or blueprint. Chokmah is the divine masculine quality, emerging with a hard hat and a tool kit, ready to create universes. It is the impulse to take creative action through an expanding flow of energy. Chokmah represents the creative will in general, and the male reproductive impulse. As Wisdom, Chokmah is considered to be the higher intellect, having the potential to see through all things. It is active, analytical awareness of divine principles. Whereas Kether is pure knowing, and is above illusion, Chokmah is involved in the creation of illusion, but sees it for what it is.

The next Sephirah emanated is Binah (BEE·nah), meaning Understanding. It sits at the top of the Pillar of Severity and corresponds to the right side of the head. It is the primordial feminine quality – the Hermetic opposite of Chokmah. Binah is the female reproductive impulse, and embodies receptive qualities of spirit. The expansive quality of Chokmah, by itself, could scatter the seeds of creative energy out to infinity. Binah, in contrast, is the impulse to cool the energy back down, so that it can assume the form of a specific creation that can persist and be of some interest. As Understanding, Binah is intuition and instinct. At the cosmic level, Binah is said to be the origin of time and persistence. This corresponds to conception and birth in humans. Along with Kether and Chokmah, Binah completes what is referred to as the Supernal Triad. These are the unified spirit sphere and the two parent spheres of consciousness, upon which all the rest of Creation is based.

Men and women alike share Chokmah and Binah qualities, but in different balances, just as their bodies share the male and female hormones, testosterone and estrogen. These differences allow them to perform somewhat different functions in their life activities. Reproductive roles are obvious. In raising children the parents are best equipped for somewhat differing roles. With younger children, mothers lead the way. But it is often Dad who takes the lead in teaching his older children to have some toughness and self-discipline, as they will need it to be effective throughout life. These differing but useful qualities show why the side Pillars on the Tree are

called Pillars of Function. The Middle Pillar of Consciousness or Equilibrium is the realm in which sane beings make balanced and rational decisions. Even though parents play somewhat different roles, they should achieve good agreement on how to raise their children, and on how to manage life in general. Imbalanced thought and action occur when consciousness gets stuck within either of the side Pillars of Function. Classic examples are a mother who never disciplines a child and ends up with a teenage brat, vs. a father whose severe discipline causes hate, rebellion, and many of the same problems.

It is said that during Creation, which is also to say during the Fall, severe imbalances of consciousness were spun off to the right and left of the Tree, as each Sephirah was emanated. These imbalances are characterized as demons, and correspond at the cosmic level to the human imbalances discussed above. Each such demon is called a Qlippah (plural Qlippoth), which literally means "shell," since it is the extreme and exaggerated form of a Sephirah. The cosmic Trance, as was discussed in chapter 5, needed to persist throughout the ages so that Creation could continue, and so that spirit could explore the countless joys and sorrows of the life game. This, in turn, had the effect of causing the Qlippoth to persist; and in fact, to be the prime sources of the social and spiritual ills of mankind. In other words, the nuttiness of some individuals and groups, as well as the more modest challenges in relationships, are fueled by similar imbalances within the higher planes, existing as relics of Creation. However, the Qlippoth and their effects can be minimized, even while life persists. The forum for such improvement is a great spiritual awakening of Apocalyptic magnitude, diminishing the intensity of the Trance for the civilization of Earth.

The next Sephirah of interest is Daath (dahth or DAH·ath), meaning Knowledge. In Qabalah it is referred to as Higher Knowledge, and is situated on the Middle Pillar just below Chokmah and Binah. On the body, Daath is associated with the mouth, throat, and neck. This eleventh Sephirah is not numbered on the Tree diagram, because it is not one of the ten original Sephiroth that were identified in the Sepher Yetzirah. The notion of Daath had evolved in Qabalist thought by some point in the Middle Ages. However, some writers still give it a bad rap as a "non-Sephirah," or just ignore it, deferring to the ancient book as the final word on the matter. This comes from a failure to appreciate its great importance. Other authors have elaborated about it at length. But my contribution is to suggest its connection to romance – a point that I have yet to see made in the writings of others. Daath may be referred to as the Higher Moon, because it is a reflection of Kether, which could be called the Higher Sun. To see how this occurs, it is necessary to consider the nature of Chokmah and Binah. The latter two are the male and female aspects of spirit, coming into separate existence as they leave their state of unity in Kether. However, they attract each other, and interact in an impulse to achieve, once again, a degree of equilibrium. The state achieved is a field of romantic love and harmony that mirrors the higher unity from which the two have come. It is a quality present in all good marriages, and is one of the most important factors for the healthy development of children. It is sad that today there are some Westerners who play down the importance of marriage and gender role models in raising children. The two parent figures and the field of love they generate help a developing child form a balanced consciousness, an intuitive sense of who he or she is, and a receptivity to the higher aspects of spirit. Even for a childless couple, the Daath they emanate is quite important to the health of the civilization. A well-adjusted couple sharing true love induces impulses toward higher spiritual principles in all with whom they come into contact. The location of Daath on the body is very significant in this context. Much physical contact between the genders would be pertinent only to sex, or "carnal knowledge," were it not for romantic kissing. However, lip

kissing tends to result in far deeper emotions than does most other physical affection. This is because it stimulates the higher parts of the Tree of Life for the two lovers, and taps into the corresponding romantic entities on the higher planes. Thus, the term Higher Knowledge is very appropriate for the sphere of Daath.

The sphere of Chesed (HESS·ed or CHESS·ed, "ch" as in "loch") sits below Chokmah on the Pillar of Mercy. Chesed means Mercy, and so gives the Right Pillar its name. This Sephirah corresponds to the left arm of the body. It is the extension of the maternal intent of Binah to a lower plane, and in particular expresses the gentle intent of a mother in dealing with her young children. Binah, of course, tops the Pillar of Severity. Human birth is an act of materialization, similar to the entry of spirit into time at the cosmic level. However, after birth has occurred, the intent of a mother turns to comforting her offspring and encouraging the interests and desires of her children. This intent is well symbolized by the left arm and the Pillar of Mercy.

Across from Chesed, in the middle of the Left Pillar, is the sphere of Geburah (geh·BOOR·ah), which means Severity, and gives the Pillar its name. It corresponds to the right arm, and is an extension of the ethical intent of Chokmah to a lower plane. At the Supernal level, Chokmah's ethical function is expressed in seeing through illusion and dispelling lies. It can prevent things from even occurring that are not in keeping with higher principles. Being the ultimate dissolving function, Chokmah tops the Pillar of Mercy. However, on a more materialized plane, with free will being a reality, events can occur which may be perceived as negative and undesirable. Thus the right arm of Geburah, in the Pillar of Severity, symbolizes restraint, conflict, and even physical destruction. Military and police functions are obvious. However, the simple restraint of a rambunctious child, even when balanced with love (Chesed), is also an expression of Geburah.

In considering Chesed and Geburah it is important to take note of the pattern connecting the right side of the head to the left arm, and the left side to the right arm. This zigzagging of intent and function continues into the lower parts of the Tree in an even more complex manner. However, the two mentioned connections lead to a surprising discovery linking Qabalah to physical science, which we will examine later before leaving Jupiter.

Next, on the Middle Pillar, in the center of the Tree of Life, is the sphere of Tiphareth (TIF·er·eth), which signifies beauty and harmony. It possesses a balanced mix of Mercy and Severity, from the two Sephiroth just above on the side Pillars. Tiphareth is associated variously with the heart or the solar plexus. In keeping with its yellow color it is called the sphere of the Sun. It possesses many qualities of Kether, the Higher Sun. It is the cosmic Child of Chokmah and Binah. Tiphareth is said to be the sphere of the Redeemer, or of Redemption. It also is said to be the midpoint between the more spiritual planes above and the materialized planes below. The last two qualities directly relate, as they describe the state of consciousness that any person or group would require to act as a conduit of redemption for the world. Such beings would need to act within the material plane, rather than in the high heaven of Kether. However, they also would need to be very conscious of the spiritual Supernals, so as to bring their higher values and consciousness back into the civilization of Earth.

At the bottom of the Pillar of Mercy, below Chesed, we find the sphere of Netzach (NET·sahk or NET·sahch, "ch" as in "loch"). In Qabalah it is translated as Victory. In the body of Adam Kadmon this Sephirah is pictured in the position of the left hip, and is symbolized by the entire left leg. Netzach signifies natural beauty, as opposed to the more spiritual beauty found in Tiphareth. On entering the physical realms and moving out of touch with Spirit, the equilibrium of Tiphareth decays, and instinct is divorced from intellect. The intuitive faculties

become the natural instincts of each of the species. Netzach is the sphere of Nature, instinct, and desire. Also called Nature Triumphant, it describes all creatures in a competitive system in which the ultimate values are the survival of each organism and species. The transcendent values from above are out of reach; but like the colors of a rainbow, they have been refracted into the instincts and desires of the many types of organism. Survival is maximized for the fittest – the strong, able, healthy, and beautiful. Thoughtful self-restraint is seen only in limited measure in the higher animals, other than man. In human terms, the function of Netzach consciousness might be symbolized by the hunter whose triumph over nature allows him to provide food and clothing for himself and his fellows. This also is the driving force behind conservative political philosophies, which emphasize competition and personal responsibility. Imbalanced consciousness in Netzach can be seen in the hunter who kills for blood lust, and in a civilization that depletes and destroys its natural resources. It is living for the moment – a classic animal quality. It is manifested in corporate greed and dishonesty, and in repressive governments in which a few power mongers force their wills upon the many.

Below Geburah, at the bottom of the Pillar of Severity, sits the sphere of Hod (pronounced "hōde"), meaning Splendor. It is the sphere of the personal and collective human intellect, in the same way that Netzach is the sphere of instinct. It is considered the lower intellect, in contrast with the spiritual wisdom of Chokmah – the higher intellect. Hod is the capacity of living organisms to rationalize, to consider alternatives to instinctive impulses, and to synthesize new practical values based on experience. Liberal political philosophies are based on Hod. One of the liberal maxims is that just because something is natural, it isn't necessarily right. Just as prudent use of the intellect balances instinct for the good of the individual and the civilization, many liberal ideals balance conservative political trends to optimize survival and quality of life. Natural resources must be protected and nurtured, rather than just consumed. A balance of competition with cooperation, and personal responsibility with collective responsibility, result in optimal social health. Free enterprise must be balanced with corporate accountability. A country needs its leaders, to avoid anarchy and chaos. However, the leadership must be held accountable to the People through democratic processes.

Nevertheless, Hod can be the ultimate trouble maker in its ability to rationalize new sets of values – out of thin air, as it were. Those values can be divorced not only from the natural instincts of Netzach, but from the Supernal spiritual values as well – hence the designation as the lower intellect is appropriate. Imbalanced Hod consciousness might be symbolized by a liberal professor who lies awake nights, thinking up new and creative ways to pervert nature. It's appalling that so many Americans are in prison for crimes involving drug abuse and trafficking. Solution: legalize the more popular recreational drugs to "reduce crime." Attempts to uphold high educational standards through federally mandated testing can result in a higher failure rate in some communities, especially those of lower economic status. College entrance exams can result in admission of more students from some communities than from others. The solutions to both: dumb down the tests so everyone can pass; and admit those students within the top ranks of their high school classes, regardless of academic achievement. While admitting that strength, competence, health, and beauty are very nice things, it just wouldn't do if people lacking any of these virtues earned less money – or enjoyed life any less – than those lucky ones who have it all. Therefore, it is needful to mandate equal results, while calling it "leveling the playing field." The connection of the lower intellect to the right leg and hip may lead one to joke that some liberals have all their brains in their buttocks!

The next Sephirah is Yesod (yeh·SŌDE or YEH·sōde), meaning Foundation. It is situated on

the Middle Pillar, just below Netzach and Hod. On the body, it is associated with the reproductive area. Yesod is the sphere of the Astral Plane, which is a dense level of spiritual energy situated just above the physical. It includes sexual energy, and also is the substance of the astral bodies which the deceased initially take with them on departure from the physical. Yesod is the sphere of the Moon because it is a reflection of Tiphareth – the sphere of the Sun. Instinct, or natural desire, could be said to recombine with the rational mind to form Yesod, resulting in a lower equilibrium that is rather divorced from higher values. As the sexual drive is a major aspect of this Sephirah, it makes the foregoing point graphic. Humans certainly use their scheming minds to pursue romance. But any higher values often get left in the dust when puberty arrives, and riding the Moon becomes the chief preoccupation. Deep romantic love comes from Daath – the sphere of the Higher Moon – as discussed earlier. However, it is a rarity among humans, as it requires a spiritual awareness and sensitivity of a rather high nature. Most marriages in the Western world are based on Yesod and social ambitions, while the arranged marriages common in certain parts of the Third World lack even that dignity. Real Daath love results from a deep mutual appreciation of the two lovers for each other as their Higher Selves, and such love would last until the grave and far beyond. We're told that love makes the world go around. While Daath can lift one's consciousness into the heavens, and can result in spiritual empowerment for the enlightened, Yesod is the mechanism by which the many propagate the race. Thus, the meaning of Yesod as Foundation is appropriate.

At the bottom of the Tree of life is found the Sephirah of Malkuth (mal·KOOTH or MAL·kooth), meaning Kingdom. On the body it is associated with the feet. Malkuth refers to the physical plane as a whole, and its various shades of green and earth tones symbolize the Earth. There is a strong parallel running through Kether, Tiphareth, and Malkuth. The white sphere of Kether contains all the colors in balance and purity, and all elements of spirit in their native equilibrium. As these elements become separate and distinct through the functions of the side Pillars, they recombine to form equilibriums on successive lower planes, extending from spirit to matter.

The foregoing is a modern glimpse of Qabalah in a nutshell. Volumes have been written on concepts not presented here, and contain additional inspiration for those interested in further study of the subject. Some are listed in appendix B – Bibliography and Suggested Reading. The profound nature of the Qabalah does great tribute to those ancient Jewish minds who formulated its basics, as well as to the many writers of various cultures who also have contributed. Nevertheless, it is important to realize that Qabalah in its broad, modern sense is neither Judaism nor Christianity – nor any religion in the dogmatic sense. It is the still-evolving frontier of spiritual science at its best. Like the philosophy of Plato and the astronomy of Galileo, it belongs to all of humankind who pursue it in the genuine and open-minded spirit of science. It can enhance any system of religious belief that is open to use of the scientific method to gain more spiritual truth. And it can be used outside of any faith-based system as a religion of pure spiritual science – your choice.

° ° °

Having now received these lessons, courtesy of the advanced souls of Jupiter, I hope that you are even now experiencing a great increase in your X-ray vision. However, if you can bring yourself to pry your eyes from the spiritual scenery for a moment, you may give me a hand in unpacking these crates of instruments. Before we leave the Giant Planet, we will explore another matter with which you may be pleasantly surprised. Even many long-time students of metaphysics are unaware of the elegant and wondrous connections between the Qabalistic Tree

of Life and the physical sciences.

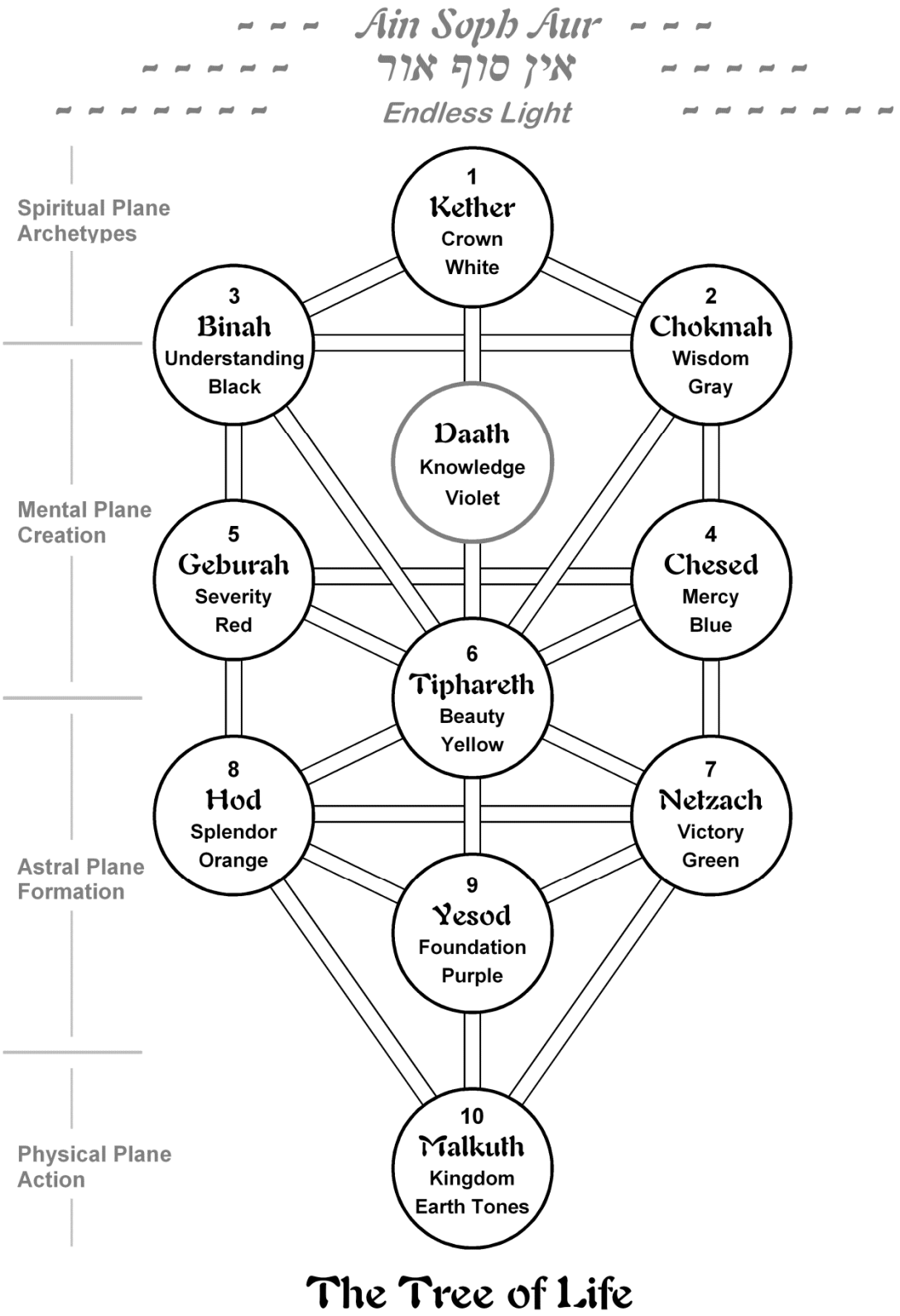

Figure 6-1: The Qabalistic Tree of Life

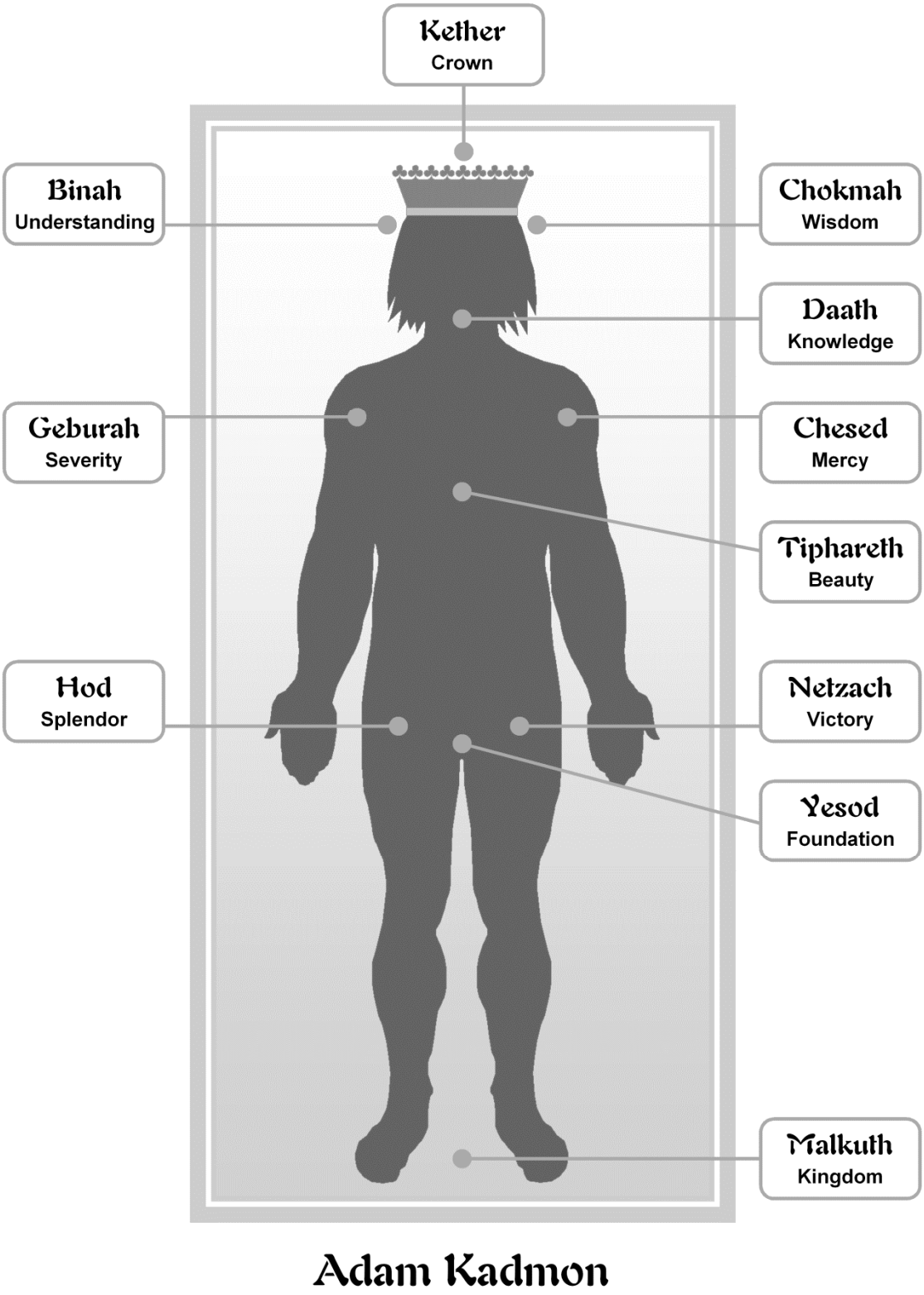

Figure 6-2: Adam Kadmon

Chapter 7

Qabalah and Science

An important technique of scientific research is testing a theory by checking out its predictions. This often involves arriving at similar conclusions by different means. When these matters fall into place, it strengthens a theory greatly. The Qabalistic glyphs of the Tree of Life and Adam Kadmon are expressions of an ancient spiritual theory, based mostly upon mystical and intuitive work. For anyone who seriously studies both Qabalah and the physical sciences, the similar patterns and conclusions often are surprising and elegant. So before we leave Jupiter, allow me to share a number of the fascinating connections that have caught my attention. After this tour, when back in earthly life, you may observe additional connections on your own.

° ° °

The white sphere of Kether is sometimes referred to as the First Whirlings. At the grand level of spiritual Creation, Kether is not something physical, but is an accumulation of points of pure spiritual consciousness from the Endless Light. However, there is an interesting parallel in cosmology. In the early physical universe, particles of gas and dust were attracted together by gravity, and formed clouds. The gravitational forces then caused the clouds to rotate. Many of these clouds became what we call galaxies. Since we became familiar with As Above So Below, it should not be surprising to find parallels in spiritual and physical processes. We should expect them. But this suggests that spirit and matter are not entirely different things. One is very rarefied and the other very dense. Yet, they seem to be different stages of existence on a continuous spectrum, and share some of the same behavior. It is interesting that the early Qabalists picked up on the Whirling quality via purely mystical means, whereas scientists study similar behavior in matter by using mathematical theories and making physical observations.

In the upper part of the Tree, Kether emanates other spheres. These include the expansive sphere of Chokmah, suggesting space; and contractive Binah, the source of time and persistence. As the processes move from pure spirit to denser levels, these states condense into the yellow sphere of Tiphareth, thought to be the midpoint between spirit and the physical world. In the lower part of the Tree, Tiphareth differentiates into still more creative processes, the end result being the sphere of Malkuth, or the physical universe, at the bottom of the glyph. While at the Creation level this is viewed as a spirit-to-matter process, certain very intriguing parallels occur entirely within the physical plane.

The Big Bang, while physical, can be viewed as analogous to Kether, or to the first emanations from Kether. From general relativity we know that at the moment of the Bang, space, time, and matter were not distinct. The forces that expanded into the universe we know existed briefly as a very hot, dense point, with no features such as galaxies or stars. It could even be viewed, symbolically, as a single-cell embryo that would expand and form features over time. Three space dimensions were emanated from the Bang, as was the dimension of time. Matter began as a rapidly expanding cloud of particles, and later settled into the galaxies and galactic clusters now scattered throughout the cosmos.

Within galaxies, gravity pulls gas and dust together into enormous balls, until the pressure of tremendous weight causes ignition. These are the stars, and include our own Sun. Both the name and the color suggest Tiphareth – said to be the sphere of the Sun. Nuclear processes within the

Sun cause heavier elements to form. From time to time, large masses of heavy matter are expelled from the Sun, and spread throughout the area of the solar system. Gravity pulls some of this matter back together, forming planets, including our home planet Earth.

In a nutshell, we have a credible Tree of Life pattern in the physical plane, in which the Big Bang emanates from Kether; the Sun and other stars correspond to Tiphareth; and the Earth and similar bodies correspond to Malkuth. Since the early elements after the Bang were mostly hydrogen and helium, the pattern of very rarefied stuff being processed into denser material is evident within the physical plane, and parallels the scale from spirit to matter in the larger plane of Creation.

In attending some Rosicrucian Qabalah lectures, I recall comments to the effect that each Sephirah (sphere) on the Tree of Life contains a smaller Tree within it. On the surface, this sounds cryptic. What does it mean? The foregoing example makes it clearer. Envision the sphere of Malkuth – the physical universe – at the bottom of the Tree. Then envision a little Tree of Life diagram, wholly within Malkuth. The smaller Tree is precisely the cosmological pattern discussed above, progressing from the Big Bang to rocky planets like our own.

° ° °

On a smaller scale, biology and neurology have some very interesting parallels with Qabalah. The ancient Qabalists said that Chokmah (Wisdom, masculine) corresponds to the left side of the face. Binah (Understanding, feminine) corresponds to the right side. Chokmah is relatively logical, while Binah is relatively intuitive. Modern science has shown that the left brain is the primary processor of logic, whereas the right brain is the base of intuition and artistic creativity. In our initial look at Qabalah, it was noted that there is a connection between the functions of Binah as Mother, and the left arm, which corresponds to Chesed (Mercy). We also saw that the masculine Chokmah has a connection to the right arm of Geburah (Severity), in its ethical function. But modern neurology has shown us that the right arm is controlled by the left brain, and the left arm by the right brain. All these parallels are far too striking to be coincidental. Yet, the early Qabalists discovered these patterns through pure mysticism. Science, in contrast, drew its similar conclusions entirely through physical methods that presumably were not available to the ancients. Any reader interested in detailed information about the psychology of the brain and nervous system is referred to *Left Brain, Right Brain*, by Sally P. Springer and Georg Deutsch.[1] The book is very readable, while rigorously scientific.

I've spotted another parallel that is less obvious, but quite interesting. Qabalah says that the masculine Chokmah was the first Sephirah emanated from Kether during Creation. Feminine Binah was then emanated from Chokmah by a transformation of some qualities of the latter into their Hermetic opposite – the "rib from Adam's side." In contrast, from modern biology we know that a human embryo, at an early stage of development, has the tiny beginnings of a womb. But in males, as development continues, the Y-chromosome kicks in, causing the womb to disappear, and the male reproductive organs to form. A fetus not having undergone that Hermetic transformation becomes a girl and has a preponderance of estrogen, while the transformed fetus becomes a boy with a preponderance of testosterone. Qabalah and other esoteric teachings have said that matter mirrors spirit. The tradition even says that God created the universe so that He could look in the mirror and see Himself. Tradition often refers to God in the masculine, while the term "Mother Earth" is equally traditional. So perhaps God created the mirror so that He could see Herself!

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[1]. Sally P. Springer and Georg Deutsch, *Left Brain, Right Brain* (New York: W. H. Freeman and Company, 1998).

Men and women are similar in nature as Adam-Kadmon-style models of Creation, but they differ in degree. The differing balances of hormones was noted above. Women are logical (usually), but excel, on average, in intuitive and artistic matters. Men are best equipped for the logical functions they use in meeting their social expectations, but also can be quite intuitive. The most highly developed men and women are able to make good use of both brain functions to deal with all matters, both human and spiritual. And I'd speculate that those who are so-developed tend to have the best relationships with the opposite sex.

These connections may help convince skeptical scientists that biological evolution is an ordered response of matter to the influence of spirit, and not some accidental outcome of unpredictable processes. They also may help more of the religiously devout to realize that six-day Creation stories are metaphors for elegant spiritual processes that are manifested in evolution, rather than contradicting it.

Those familiar with mathematical fractals will recall how patterns tend to recur in nature from the largest scales to the smallest, *ad infinitum*. Trees and plants form increasingly smaller limbs and branches that spring from the larger. Water flowing along coastlines causes large and small land patterns to develop that mimic each other in shape. The Qabalistic Tree of Life has proven itself, beyond all doubt, to be far more than a piece of obscure religious dogma. With enough scrutiny it can be found everywhere and in everything, at scales large and small. But the search for it is much more than an egg hunt. When Qabalistic mysticism is studied along with scientific methods and attitudes, the right and left brains work together to reveal the deepest mysteries of the universe and consciousness. These methods are far more than an intellectual exercise. Over time, they can enhance intelligence, insight, happiness, love, health, and prosperity. When balanced with worthy ambition and physical work, they are one of the best ways for a Seeker to become all he or she can be in the current incarnation – and even to maximize the bets for the next.

° ° °

You can continue this lofty pursuit in your own life after we return to Earth. But now, with the scientific instruments repacked and secured, we are off on the next leg of our spiritual journey, en route to Saturn. And believe it or not – there still are many more marvelous secrets to learn. If you need a break before you can deal with any more, feel free to visit the space craft's facilities. There are zero-gravity instructions posted on the inside of the door.

Chapter 8

Taming the Dragon

As we cruise toward Saturn through the vacuum of space we are never alone. There is One who is always present, even if unseen. He has been with you since birth, and will be with you to your death. He is the source of every challenge you've ever faced. Yet, if properly addressed, he can relinquish to you the power to triumph in all pursuits in every plane of existence. Permit me to introduce the Dragon.

° ° °

Dragons and serpents have a sinister place in mythology. A popular medieval theme is the slaying of a dragon by a valiant knight, who often rescues a threatened maiden in the process. The book of Genesis contains the well-known story of how a serpent corrupted Adam and Eve, and got the human race into a mire of spiritual alienation and hardship.

Yet, the serpent and dragon have long been symbols of wisdom. Many mystical and curiosity shops sell dragon figurines. Some of these, including full-size lamps, involve a dragon holding up a mystical globe of light in one of its claws. Wizard figurines often are paired with dragons. Stories of sorcery, including the classic tales of Merlin and King Arthur, have wizards describing the awe and danger in the Dragon if he is approached ineptly, but portraying him as an ally of the Adept and a source of tremendous wisdom and power.

Snakes also are symbols of medicine and healing. The classic symbol of medicine is the Staff of Asclepius, in which a serpent is climbing upward around a staff held by the healer. A better-known symbol of medicine is the Caduceus of Hermes, one of the drawings in figure 8-1. In that glyph two snakes spiral upward along a winged staff. The Caduceus is an ancient spiritual symbol that likely became more associated with medicine in modern times due to its similarity with the Staff of Asclepius.

< figure 8-1 about here, on even-numbered (verso) full page >

< figure 8-2 about here, on facing odd-numbered (recto) full page >

A first step in understanding these mysteries and seeming contradictions is to note the striking similarities between most animal forms and the human form. Many have the equivalent of two arms and two legs, or flippers in place of them. Even insects generally have two eyes, as do all the higher creatures. All have some kind of head, and at least a rudimentary brain. These observations indicate that the Qabalistic Tree of Life is evident in animals, as well as in humans, as variants of Adam Kadmon. The Tree is a schematic diagram of Spirit manifesting itself in living forms at all stages of evolution.

In looking at the scientific parallels to Qabalah, we saw the crisscrossing patterns of causation on the Tree of Life as relating to the zigs and zags of the nervous system – in particular, the brain-to-arm connections. It is evident that the Caduceus is yet another similar pattern. There is an eerie similarity between the Caduceus and medical pictures of the human nervous system. The heads of the serpents suggest the left and right brains, while their bodies suggest the nerve network throughout the human body. If you think of the wings as symbolic of Kether – pure spirit above the head – then you have an even stronger connection to the Tree.

Figure 8-1 also includes another Qabalistic construct known as Jacob's Ladder, after the account in Genesis of Jacob's vision of a ladder extending from Earth to Heaven. There is a

tradition that each of the four planes of existence – spiritual, mental, astral, and physical – contains a complete Tree within itself that describes it in more detail. These consecutive Trees are often linked together in overlap, with the Tiphareth heart center of one plane corresponding to the Malkuth, or feet, of the next higher. This chain results in the ladder-like construct extending from Earth to Spirit. Where else have we seen twin spirals that include more twists and turns than does the basic Tree diagram? The double helix of DNA certainly comes to mind. If single cells don't have an outward shape of Adam Kadmon, then each one seems to have a Jacob's Ladder in its nucleus.

Different animal forms are symbols of different aspects of consciousness. Birds are symbolic of the airy spiritual entities of higher planes, and their songs are reminiscent of the tales of spiritual music. From the beautiful to the fierce, animals are manifestations of the spiritual archetypes lurking in our dreams, our subconscious minds, and our distant spiritual past. Bulldog-like gargoyles threaten impishly, and griffins – the winged lions – guard against evil. Earthly snakes and lizards suggest the archetypal Dragon.

Many snakes and a few lizards have a poisonous bite. This is a clear parallel with the fiery breath of the Dragon. The unraveling of their deep mysteries requires a close look at esoteric traditions of Time. On the Tree of Life, Binah – the source of Time – is said to be the beginning of life's hardships and problems. The beginning of Time parallels incarnation and birth, the entry into the challenges of human life. Before Time there is the spacey timelessness of Chokmah. Time slows things down and creates solidity, which is what causes any problem to persist. The Dragon actually is a glyph of the process of free spirit entering Time, and beginning a far more challenging Game of Life.

Adam Kadmon normally describes a human figure at a single moment in Time, or a timeless eternal giant with his feet on Earth and his head in the clouds of Spirit. But we get a most interesting result by stretching Adam out in Time, as shown in figure 8-2. His head is in the Spirit world, and is also at the beginning of Time. His elongated body extends down to the Earth plane, and indefinitely throughout Time. In this intriguing context, Adam has morphed into the Dragon. As eternal spiritual beings, each of us has great power and vision as parts of our intrinsic nature. Entry into Time, to play the Life Game, required a temporary decrease in awareness. The bite of the Dragon is symbolic of that transformation, and his poison is the beginning of the Trance. This is an accurate interpretation of the Genesis story, in which a Serpent beguiled Man and Woman, and initiated the Fallen State.

It's noteworthy that earthly crocodiles mimic the Dragon in a special way. From figure 8-2, it is obvious that the Dragon keeps growing as Time continues. Most animals have a maximum adult size, at which they're considered fully grown. But crocodiles that have reached maturity just keep growing indefinitely, as long as they live.

Earthly snakes bite mice and similar prey to subdue them, so they can be swallowed and digested. Their original forms are broken down as they pass through the snake's digestive system. Time, if not countered by potent acts of Spirit, has a very similar effect in breaking down the order of things. The Second Law of Thermodynamics states that entropy increases with Time. Entropy means disorder, so the Second Law is saying that order decreases with Time. But philosophically, since things are always in some kind of order, I'd suggest that what Time diminishes is "meaningful order." And "meaning," in turn, is invariably a spiritual matter.

The Big Bang was meaningful order in the same sense that a single-cell embryo is meaningful. The embryo is engineered so as to develop into the human form during its early existence. The Bang was engineered to form galaxies, stars, and planets over a very long period

– a necessity for human life ever to develop. But even the stars burn out, just as bodies eventually wrinkle and lose their viability. It takes another incarnation and birth to begin a life in a new body, and another occasional Big Bang can create new universes.

In the biosystem of a planet, meaningful order emerges through the evolutionary processes. Spirit can initiate single-cell life forms, and then facilitate their development into more complex organisms. But under the influence of Time, species come and go just as do individual bodies. Ice ages and meteor collisions wiped out the dinosaurs and mammoths. In ancient Greek theology the early god Kronos was the originator of Time, and was said to be a deity who ate his children. This bizarre-sounding notion is a symbolic statement of scientific fact. Time aids creation and persistence, but facilitates demise as well. As Kronos devoured some of his earlier children on planet Earth, others are still thriving and even evolving.

In social matters – the prime subject of this book – the game between Spirit and the Dragon is an ongoing and colorful drama. As long as people are fairly content, their indifference leads them on a sleepy course down through the coils of the Dragon. But when empires and social arrangements have run their course, and discontent is rampant, human spirits get motivated and bring about major change. Revolutions, coups, and major political reform all are acts of Spirit – in creating new, meaningful order – just as are peaceful achievements in science, art, literature, and business. But although radical change can be very constructive when enacted thoughtfully by enlightened beings, it can amount to cultural suicide when led by the ill-tempered and ignorant. The American Revolution and the thoughtful founding of the nation's government were some of the more enlightened social actions in recent memory. We'll be taking a closer look at some of that colorful history when back home on Earth. In contrast, implementation of Marxist Communism in the Soviet countries led to many decades of misery for most of their citizens. Spirit can be smart or stupid. It can foster new waves of prosperity, or it can aid the Dragon in destroying it. The best lesson to learn is that happiness is gained only through a good balance of wisdom and work. Whenever life is taken for granted, the Second Law will ensure that entropy prevails. If you've ever had the feeling that, despite a few well-intended efforts, the world in general is turning to excrement – you were right, and now you know why! Real Men and Women summon the personal responsibility needed to create their lives day by day, and to rejuvenate their world in the process. Mice get digested by the serpent that swallowed them.

The Taming of the Dragon can happen by a spiritual awakening so profound that his original poison no longer affects our consciousness. It is possible to continue with a new phase of the Life Game – still operating in physical Time, but with far more access to our eternal natures. The Staff of Asclepius and the Caduceus of Hermes are good symbols of how the Dragon is tamed. The serpents upright along the staffs symbolize the confront and understanding of the entire Dragon in the present moment. He caused us to Forget our eternal natures and identities. For us to regain consciousness of them we must Remember, and take personal responsibility for agreeing to the Game in the first place.

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And now, with Saturn squarely ahead in the viewer, we'll turn our attention from the Dragons and take a closer look at the Maidens.

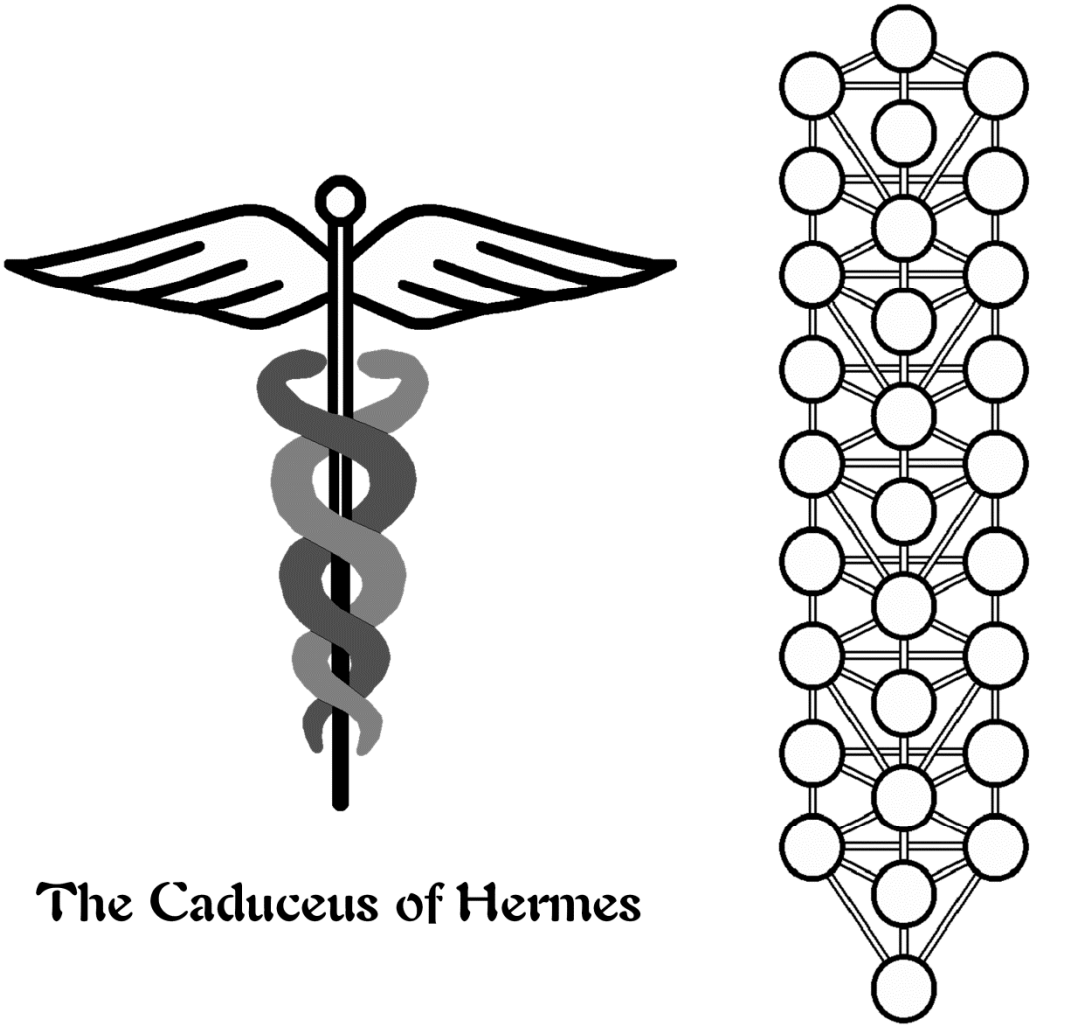

Figure 8-1: The Caduceus and Jacob's Ladder

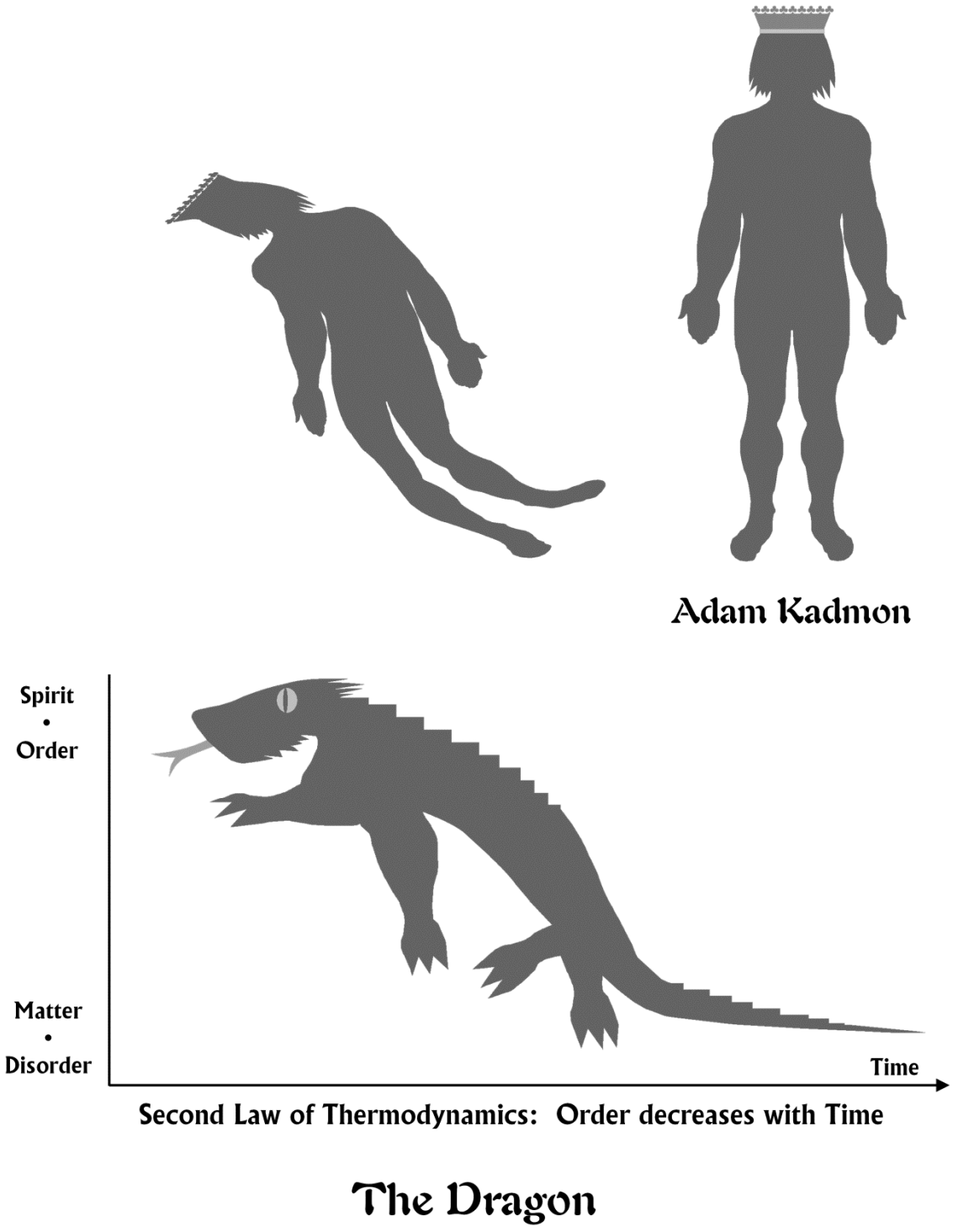

Figure 8-2: The Dragon and Time

Chapter 9

The Apocalypse is in the Cards

Having landed on Titan, Saturn's largest moon, we have a spectacular view of the beautiful and mysterious Ringed Planet. Beauty and mystery are tantalizing. They often intrigue us in ways that seem beyond words. They resonate within our consciousness in ways that ring of deeper, hidden meaning. Yet it's our way, as humans, to analyze our experiences and try to put them to the pen. Inadequate words circle around the truth, much as Saturn's rings circle the planet. But when better words are found to express a deeper level of insight, it is as if a thousand lights just turned on.

Spiritual traditions are full of beauty and mystery that beg for better understanding. They challenge their followers to seek the revelations within their secrets. Our search for deeper meaning in this awesome place will involve scrutiny of two such revered spiritual traditions. One is the last book of the New Testament – The Revelation to John – also known as the Apocalypse. The other is the Tarot – those mysterious packs of cards often found in a glass case at the end of a bookstore shelf.

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During my childhood, my parents would often have a Bible reading a few nights per week before bedtime. We'd pass the Good Book around and take turns reading a chapter or two. We'd work our way through one of the four Gospels or parts of the Old Testament. My mind went to Revelation. They never suggested it. But being the very last book, it *had* to be special! They'd laugh when I requested it. They revered it as much as all that preceded it, but admitted that it was difficult to understand. As we read, it struck a deep chord within my consciousness. I didn't understand it analytically, but knew that it was my favorite. It somehow hinted of the future and the ultimate resolution of many things.

The Apocalypse is a mystical vision with very intense symbolism. People throughout the ages – especially those with spiritual interests – have had such mystical epiphanies. Both the seers and others will try to interpret these visions. When recorded, they often become part of religious traditions. Scholars will offer their own takes on the meanings. All who interpret, including the seer, tend to view the symbols through the lenses of their own religious beliefs. Yet, whether their religious backgrounds are Christian, Jewish, or Hindu, all are spiritual beings living in the same universe, and rooted in all of the same higher planes of existence. Therefore, such symbolic mystical experiences are often more universal than the belief systems of even the seers. When recorded in detail, these visions may inspire new insight in thoughtful readers for ages to come. An intellectual method to find clarity and inspiration from these classic experiences is to compare their symbols to those of other spiritual traditions.

From a Qabalist perspective, the most potent symbols in Revelation are the Spirit and the Bride. All the awesome action in the story is preparing the way for a great wedding of global spiritual importance. Qabalah makes clear that the masculine and feminine principles are not just incidental features of biology. They are the two most essential poles of spiritual consciousness on all planes – from the material world back into eternity. The "alchemical marriage" is a long-standing metaphysical ideal. Every sought-after pot of gold seems to be the reward of bringing these two principles into better harmony.

Figure 9-1 shows a Qabalistic diagram called Tetragrammaton, or roughly, “four letters.” Qabalist tradition has assigned a special significance to the spheres of Chokmah, Binah, Tiphareth, and Malkuth on the Tree of Life. They are assigned the Hebrew letters יהוה (yōd-heh-vav-heh when read right to left), or YHVH. These Hebrew letters are a very holy name of God in Judaism, often transliterated as Yahweh or Jehovah. Qabalah also assigns the attributes of Father, Mother, Son, and Daughter to these spheres, respectively. Western metaphysical tradition assigns them the alchemical elements of Fire, Water, Air, and Earth. The psychoanalytic philosophy of C. G. Jung, which itself is quite metaphysical, refers to the Qabalistic Father and Mother archetypes as the Animus and the Anima.

< figure 9-1 about here, on full page >

With all these traditions lining up nicely, it should be apparent that the Father and Mother archetypes of the Apocalypse are the Spirit and the Bride. Christian scholars often claim that the Spirit refers to Christ as the Savior, and that the Bride refers to the Church. In terms of Christian theology, these attributes may be appropriate. However, as one who believes that no religion has a corner on salvation, my opinion is that the message in these symbols is universal. At the level of Father and Mother, these are the male and female aspects of spirit – “married” or in good equilibrium with each other. Masculine and feminine consciousness play somewhat different roles in the Game of Life. Qabalah suggests differing roles by assigning the “unmarried” Son to Tiphareth – the sphere of the Redeemer – and the Daughter to Malkuth, the Earth sphere. These archetypal differences arise in myth as the valiant knights who slay the dragons; and as the beautiful maidens who marry their rescuer, and live happily ever after. A tradition rich in this symbolism is the Tarot.

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The Tarot (tair·OH or TAIR·oh) is revered as an expression of spiritual wisdom in metaphysical circles. But to many laymen, it calls to mind one thing: fortune telling. That perspective, unfortunately, belies its history and value. Numerous psychic readers do use Tarot cards for divination. They also use ordinary playing cards, and even cups of tea leaves. I know of an ordained minister with metaphysical interests who did intuitive readings at psychic fairs. He opened the Bible and picked a verse at random, then used its significance as the keynote to his reading. His psychic readings in no way diminished the value of the Bible as a source of spiritual wisdom; and neither do the psychic readings of others diminish the spiritual wisdom to be found in the Tarot.

The Tarot appeals to many spiritualists for two reasons. First, it has long been associated with metaphysical studies. Second, it provides a rich alphabet of symbols that are based on archetypes of people in all walks of life. Some students of metaphysics believe that the Tarot is several thousand years old, bearing the encoded wisdom of ancient Egypt. That theory likely misses the mark as well. In my opinion – and it is just that – the Tarot probably had its birth during the Middle Ages in Europe. In its beginnings it likely was intended as a deck of game cards, closely akin to the familiar bridge cards. Italian Tarot cards are called Tarocchi. Some older decks contain a Pope and a Popess. Bridge cards have four suits with numbered cards and face cards (royalty), plus one trump card – the Joker. Tarot decks are similar, while using different names for some of the same symbols; and they include various pictorial symbols in the numbered suit cards. Most also have in excess of twenty trump cards, including a Jester or Fool, an Emperor and an Empress, and other archetypal figures. Today there are many versions of the Tarot in print, based on themes such as witches or faeries, and even on specific ethnicities. These are born out of many consumers’ desire for novelty, and the profit motives of publishers who are

more than happy to accommodate them. However, there is a general European Tarot symbol set, with several minor variations, that established Tarot's place in the Western metaphysical tradition. References to Tarot that follow refer to that European symbol set, as opposed to the newer novelty variations. (For short reviews of a few specific published decks, see appendix D – Tarot Decks of Interest.)

The four suits of the Tarot are Wands, Cups, Swords, and Pentacles – the latter being disks bearing a five-pointed star. These correspond, respectively, to the bridge suits of Clubs, Hearts, Spades, and Diamonds. The Wand symbolizes creative Will, and is also a masculine sexual symbol. The Cup is a feminine symbol, just as its Heart counterpart is often perceived. The Sword symbolizes righteous war, leadership, and any redemptive function. The Pentacle symbolizes the physical world. The five-pointed star of the Pentacle indicates that the five elements of Spirit, Fire, Water, Air, and Earth are all active aspects of life in the physical plane. The four suits, especially when associated with Tetragrammaton, divide the Tree of Life into three general planes, from Spirit to Matter. Wands and Cups belong to the Supernal or Archetypal plane of Spirit. Swords corresponds to an intermediate Mental and Astral plane of Creation and Formation. Pentacles, as already stated, corresponds to the physical.

From our earlier encounter with Qabalah on Jupiter, we saw that the Tree of Life can appear on different scales at many levels, in fractal fashion. In particular, each sphere on the primal Tree of Life can be thought of as containing a smaller Tree glyph that further describes that realm. The Tarot has its own built-in set of fractal correspondences. Each of the four suits has four face cards. The first two are the King and Queen, just as in a bridge deck. The third is either a Prince or a Knight, corresponding to the Jack. The fourth, not present in the bridge deck, is either a Princess or a male Page. These royalty symbols have the respective elemental attributes of Fire, Water, Air, and Earth, just as does the sequence of the four suits that contain them. The function of the royal cards within each suit is to emphasize the presence of different aspects of spirit in each of the planes of existence, just like the Qabalistic Tree-within-a-Tree. For example, the King, Queen, Prince, and Princess of Pentacles indicates the way in which all levels, genders, and functions of spirit are apparent in our incarnate experience of life in the physical world.

Tarot decks that use a Knight and Page instead of a Prince and Princess are just emphasizing the functional differences between the mental and physical planes, while not indicating any gender differences in those levels. But this leads to a very interesting question: Just why in the name of Jehovah do Qabalists and other metaphysical traditions often assign an earthier level to the unmarried feminine than to the unmarried masculine? At face value, this might give some feminists indigestion. Shouldn't a Princess be able to slay a dragon and rescue a Prince? Half the time anyway? Can't Congress pass a law? In fact, the traditional polarity, when properly understood, is no slap at either gender; nor is it giving one gender more importance than the other. Instead, it is the symbolic key to a very deep and profound insight into the Trance and the Game of Life in which we are involved. It is key to understanding the Apocalypse, and how that vision actually has been playing out in the Earth's recent history. Yet, if this truth had been apparent all along, perhaps there would have been no Fall. Adam and Eve would still be in the Garden. As spirits, we'd all be sitting at the edge of eternity, twiddling our thumbs out of sheer boredom. And we'd have missed out on quinzillions of years of Experience. So with the Apocalypse in motion and our spiritual awakening in progress, let's summon all the X-ray vision we've accumulated so far during this spiritual space journey. And let's dissect this subtle truth that may be the key to all that lies ahead. Some truths affect us every day of our lives, only because we walk right past them and never really look. Expect this truth to have that character.

Shall I say that if it were a snake it would have bitten you?

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For metaphysical aspirants, real spiritual development, in my opinion, requires two principles above all else. The first is a deep realization and acceptance of personal responsibility for one's experiences and destiny. The other is a deep appreciation and understanding of the masculine and feminine principles of spirit, and their interactions. These objectives can take a lifetime (or several) to achieve, only to find that you don't yet know it all and need to keep learning. But genuine Higher Knowledge of all other spiritual matters, including divinity, comes from these two basics. If these are pursued diligently, they can eventually take you right out of the Trance and back into unity with your Higher Self.

Personal responsibility runs counter to typical human sensibilities. If someone runs a red light and hits your car, then it was their doing and not yours. If you've had a car stolen, or have had the misfortune to have been robbed and brutalized, it can leave you feeling angry, helpless, and anything but responsible. This matter, then, requires come clarification. Street criminals and punks actually are very weak-minded people. They seem to serve themselves, but they act out the demons blowing through the consciousness of other, often "decent" people. And yes, we all have those demons – they're just a part of the Trance. This explains criminals' actions. It does not justify them. When they so act, the first priority is to bring them to justice so they won't continue to harm others. Once the dust settles, though, spiritually trained victims do well to ask just what in their consciousness made them vulnerable. Some religious types may placate themselves by saying that it obviously was God's will, and choose to accept it as a personal trial. But that approach lacks the benefit of getting to the real cause in their own consciousness; and so it leaves them just as vulnerable to future problems. If victims can get even a general impression of why they were vulnerable, it can result in spiritual growth and leave them that much less a victim. Getting the "why" is a complex subject. However, one culprit is suppressed guilt feelings that have not been properly confronted. There can be unhealthy family attitudes acquired as a child that need to be released. It could come from life responsibilities that one has been avoiding. And sometimes past life regression or similar therapy may be quite helpful, although it usually is not necessary for most people. In most cases, thorough soul-searching is the best tool.

But now back to that second principle – true understanding of the masculine and feminine. So here it comes. The metaphor in Genesis tells how Eve was enticed to consume the fruit imparting knowledge of Good and Evil – the fall into duality and illusion. She then persuaded Adam to join her in this passage into Experience. At first the sequence may seem unimportant, but it actually hints at something fundamental. That nasty Dragon, affecting both genders, had an especially profound effect on feminine consciousness, and on its relationship with the masculine. It was deliberate, and quite necessary, for the Trance to occur. It amounted to the hiding or the suppression of the Divine Feminine. That is to say, feminine consciousness at the Tiphareth level – the missing female dragon slayer. Spirit was understood exclusively in terms of masculine attributes – far from the whole picture. It lowered the status of human male-female relationships down to something much more material and carnal. The deeper spiritual aspects of love and marriage between two beings were greatly damaged. But because romantic Higher Knowledge, which we saw as Daath in the Tree of Life, is essential for all deep spiritual insight, the Wisdom of Spirit was suppressed for both genders. This effectively kicked Adam and Eve out of the Garden, and propelled them into their lengthy adventures in material existence. And it is the exact reason that metaphysical knowledge went missing for centuries in mainstream Western religions, leaving only a few enlightened men and women to carry on with the arcane knowledge

in private.

The suppression of knowledge of the Divine Feminine has had an especially detrimental effect on the welfare of womankind. Apart from a few exceptional individuals, women throughout history have been quite asleep with regard to that other spiritual principle – personal responsibility for one's own experiences and destiny. Until modern times, and mainly in the West, women have had only a fraction of the autonomy that men have taken for granted. With men maintaining a small edge via their connection to masculine higher consciousness, they've historically managed to stay in better control. It was only a few generations back, even in America, that many women addressed their husbands as "Mr. ——." Women have stayed in marriages in which they were treated poorly, out of fear of living on their own. Consideration that women are less intelligent kept them from voting until modern times, and their job skills often were under-appreciated. When I was a kid, there actually were a few downtown lunch counters that would serve only men. And women haven't been asleep? On the contrary, the improvements have been occurring as part of a long, slow awakening. It's a great thing! But in this matter as in all others, personal responsibility, rather than blame, is the key to true liberation. A few women may choose to believe that men alone have held down the fairer sex until recent times, and that women always saw the light. That doesn't hold historical water, however. My own mother, and most other women of her generation, accepted many of these unbalanced considerations as reality. Self-image is a crucial key to one's destiny. Social agreements just reflect the collective self-images of the time. The placement of the unmarried masculine at Tiphareth, and the unmarried feminine at the earthier level of Malkuth, has been a practical statement of reality in the Trance. It's a feature to be transcended by the alchemical marriage, which is an upgrade to men and women alike.

Since personal responsibility is a prime key, it follows that each of us must be his or her own ultimate dragon slayer. No one else can do that job for us. Not even a messiah or a prophet. It does make it easier if we live in a civilization of enlightened beings, and have understanding and helpful friends and spouses. There are a couple of specific ways in which any of us can be redeemers, knights, or dragon slayers for others. One is by seeing the inherent worth in them, and by communicating the love and wisdom that encourages them to set themselves free – when and as they are ready to do so. That's the empathetic way. The other is by working hard to create a culture in which freedom, enlightenment, and personal responsibility are encouraged and protected, and in which excessive sympathy is minimized. That's the "tough love" way, and often means political activism. These both are the rightful functions of Tiphareth – a synthesis of Mercy and Severity – and yes, that role is wide open to enlightened Princes and Princesses alike.

Still, in practice, women of all eras and cultures would like for their dragons to be slain by marriage to a rich and handsome prince who loves them and treats them with respect. There is a way and degree in which the dragon-and-maiden myth is a natural part of the romantic. This does not need to be corrected or rewired by social engineers. Remembering from our Qabalah tour that the Qlippoth, or demons, are extreme and exaggerated forms of the Sephiroth on the Tree of Life, we can see that the Trance is a corruption and distortion of the divine romantic. Human salvation is to restore the divine romantic to what it should be – both individually and collectively. True Higher Knowledge and Wisdom are attainable only in the alchemical marriage at the Spirit-Bride level. A better relationship between the genders is an important part of that marriage. However, it also involves the reawakening of our human egos to our Higher Selves. The use of a Knight at Tiphareth and a Page at Malkuth is a good metaphor for this personal epiphany, which applies equally to men and to women.

As an example of how personal responsibility is compatible with the romantic, consider the following: A woman might prefer to marry a man wealthier than herself, and the right man may be happy to provide her the means for creative pursuits. But *spiritually*, she must assume adequate responsibility for bringing this about; and for having it persist, rather than fall apart after a failed marriage. She can do this if she is aware enough to take responsibility for men, as well as for herself, and also has the insight and sensitivity to choose a mate wisely. In addition, there must be the reciprocal issue of her responsibility for his ongoing happiness, rather than just a misguided notion that he should relieve her of life's burdens and responsibilities. An emotional feeling that he should give her the world on a gold platter, simply for having sex, is classic Trance material and a recipe for disaster. Of course, she must also be able to *have* money, which is a different issue from how to obtain it; and this can strongly depend on self-image. Spouses can assume complementary functions in life; but they can't necessarily fix each other's karma if it's seriously out of whack or incompatibly different.

The world is currently a circus full of wild contrasts. In much of the Third World – particularly in the Middle East and Africa – the Trance is still going full tilt, with women bearing the brunt. In the West, the Apocalyptic awakening is still a work in progress. It's understandable, and to be somewhat tolerated, that the awakening of the Divine Feminine will result in overreactions and passing imbalances – "reverse discrimination" for example. However, it's important to realize that as long as the relationship between the sexes seems to be a "battle," the end result has not yet been attained. Notions of "equality" pedaled by liberal politicians are a feature of the kinder, gentler version of the Trance through which the West has been passing. But things that are not equal can never be made so – and thank goodness that men and women aren't. How very boring! Equal dignity, with mutual appreciation and respect, is more on target. Congress can't mandate transcendent spiritual values, as these can come only from within. We're slowly getting there, but it will take more time and patience.

One of the greatest obstacles to the ascent of the Spirit and the Bride is that humans tend to see only their own corner of the Trance, reminiscent of the old tale of several blind people feeling different parts of an elephant. It is very helpful if we can somehow get the Big Picture of what's really going on. And, of course, that's where metaphysical studies come in handy.

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I do hope you've enjoyed the journey so far, and especially this tour of the beauty and mystery of mystical Saturn. After returning to our home planet, we'll take a good look around at the Apocalyptic circus unfolding before us – and I think you'll find it surprisingly entertaining. We have one more planetary stop before returning to Terra Firma. So we'll have to tear our eyes from the Ringed Planet for now, and pull off into space once again as we head to Uranus.

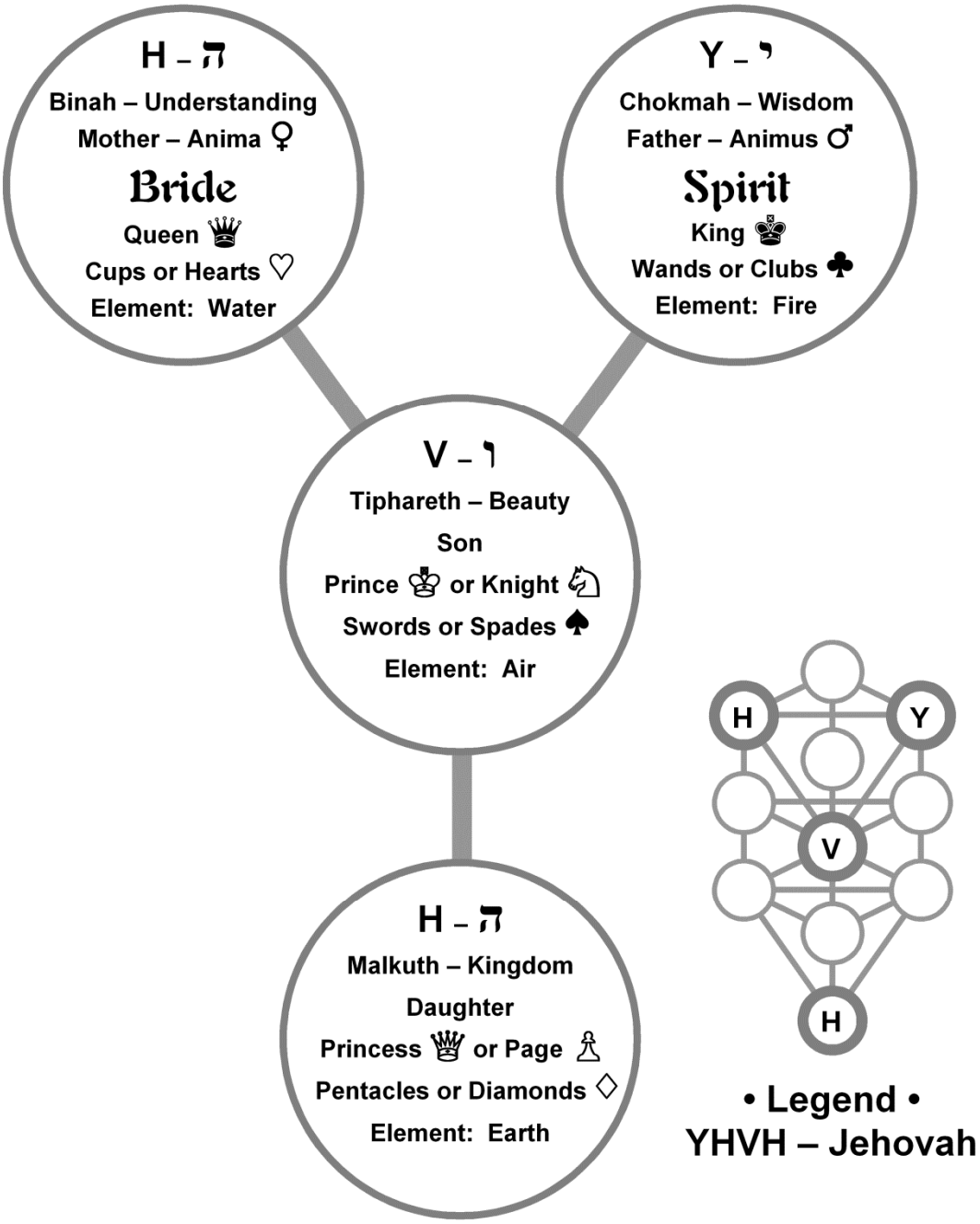

Figure 9-1: Tetragrammaton

Chapter 10

Life in a Computer

En route to Uranus we've got time to discuss the spiritual implications of something very familiar and earthy: computers.

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Today there are many Information Technology employees who also have metaphysical interests. However, that's a relatively recent development, as is the term "Information Technology." In the earlier years of my career it was "Data Processing" ("DP"), and metaphysical interest was less common in professional circles. I kept some of my coworkers entertained by reading descriptions of their astrological signs at coffee break. Some admitted that the descriptions were surprisingly accurate.

Of course it's not just metaphysical studies that have grown far more popular. In the early days, most computers were giant mainframes in air-conditioned rooms. To non-DP employees, computers were the mysterious black boxes that produced their printed reports. They'd consult with programmer-analysts when changes were required, as the DP staff were the only ones who understood those contraptions. Today, people who never use a computer are either hermits or the very elderly. They're necessities of life for the rest of us. Recent models are pocket-sized or embedded in cell phones. Even many dogs and cats have embedded computer chips for identification.

A long-standing debate is over just how much artificial intelligence has in common with human, or even spiritual, intelligence. Another As Above So Below? Some think that there is little connection, other than the way we make computers mimic life. In contrast, others believe that if a computer were only made fast and complex enough, it could "wake up" and have self-awareness. Some also may feel that human beings are just complex chemical computers.

I'll defer those debates to your judgment, as I'm sure they won't be settled in full anytime soon. However, there are a couple of related points of which I'm certain. Spiritual perceptions, human life in the physical universe, and many familiar workings of ordinary personal computers have a great deal in common. And even decades ago, I had a spooky perception that the programming of earthly computers has something in common with the programming of the Game of Life at the highest spiritual levels.

Doing the illustrations for this book thus far, as I write each chapter, has made the first point far more graphic in my mind – no pun intended. It seems that the various graphic applications that have come in handy actually parallel processes of the higher planes indicated on the Tree of Life. The silhouette images of Adam Kadmon and the Dragon were done using bitmap software – also known as raster graphics. Bitmaps are just grids full of tiny square dots called pixels. A bitmap picture is stored on disk as a big table with an entry for each pixel. Each table entry contains numbers that specify the pixel's color and brightness. By itself, a pixel looks like nothing more than a pixel. But by arranging thousands of these dots in some kind of order, the human eyes and brain perceive them as representations of larger objects and life forms. A bitmap picture can project beauty and elegance if the pixel arrangement portrays objects with the kinds of order that our minds expect and appreciate. Other bitmaps might suggest anything from a less-elegant version of an object to a messy conglomeration of pixels resembling no object at all.

There is a strong parallel between pixels in a computer, and the atoms and molecules that make up our physical environment. All physical objects are made up of these microscopic particles. Like bitmap pictures, no physical object is perfectly shaped. But just like pixels, the molecules along the edges of an object are invisible to our eyes because they are so small. Many physical objects are pleasing to us because they approximate some mental ideal. Physical circles, triangles, and squares are generally more pleasing than jagged or irregular shapes. The appealing shapes closely approximate some ideal mental archetype, but they never can exactly equal the mental object. Most humans are somewhat attractive, as their bodies approximate an archetype and also project some of the qualities of their spiritual inhabitant. Those humans fortunate enough to have very beautiful or handsome bodies attract us because they project a "better-drawn" spiritual archetype that is mathematically elegant, and that better meets our mental expectations. Yet, the archetypes are much more than incidents of biology. A perfect triangle is appealing as a mathematically elegant object in Mind. As spirits we did not learn to appreciate a triangle because of seeing something similar, but imperfect, in the physical environment. Beautiful human bodies similarly reflect a more complex set of ideal mathematical shapes, based on a spiritual archetype.

In doing the illustrations I also used a more sophisticated graphic tool that is built into the word processing software. It's a feature called vector graphics. The Tree of Life diagram, for example, was drawn entirely in the word processor, and does not involve any bitmap drawings. Vector graphics are objects such as circles, rectangles, and lines. These shapes are not stored on disk as tables of pixel images. Instead, the shape is stored as a series of numbers. These can describe things like radius, width, height, position, line thickness, and color. These numbers take up far less space on disk than would a table of pixels describing a similar object. Another advantage of vector images is that they can be resized or reshaped in a mathematical manner without causing jagged edges or distortion. This is because, unlike an object represented by pixels, these vector graphics are described perfectly. Their numbers define the perfect triangle, rectangle, or circle that we imagine in our minds. However, since the physical universe can't directly manifest one of these archetypes, the computer must create bitmap images, at appropriate times, to make the shapes visible. When editing or browsing a vector graphic drawing, the computer looks at the numbers and then creates a bitmap picture on the monitor screen. The screen image will not be perfect like the mathematical objects, but will reflect the quality of the monitor and the pixel size currently in use by the operating system. A similar process happens when an illustration is printed. The word processor and the printer software work together to create a bitmap image, and that image is what gets printed.

A comparison of these two drawing processes – bitmaps and vector graphics – may make more "graphic" the differences between the physical world and the mental and spiritual planes above it. The physical world is a huge collection of molecular pixels. Spirit puts meaningful order into these pixels, in part by the creation of living plants, animals, and humans. The humans also can arrange the pixels to approximate ideal mental shapes like circles and squares. If we compare the functions of the four planes to the process of using a computer to do an illustration, it might go something like this: In the Supernal or Archetypal plane, spirit envisions any number of archetypes of potential life forms and inanimate shapes, and how they might relate in a meaningful Life Game. In the Mental or Creative plane, Mind goes to work on the details of what it wants to manifest. That is analogous to a computer user thinking about an illustration, and perhaps sketching it on paper. In the Astral or Formative level, the Mind of the user and the logical and physical processes of the computer interact to create number tables on the disk that

reflect the author's ideas. The physical plane is analogous to the printer hardware and software using the disk information to print a bitmap image on paper.

It's worth noting that just as pixels in bitmap drawings are actually tiny vector graphics described by numbers on disk, so atomic and subatomic particles are very orderly entities that can be described by mathematical formulae. Perhaps you've heard it said that the physical universe is just a particular manifestation of Spirit. It seems that in the quantum world, the tiniest physical objects reflect the same mathematical perfection that Mind places into the larger archetypes. Therefore, even the atoms are an archetypal projection of Mind.

Another interesting point is that when humans build computers and write software, they are operating on all the planes of existence. Motivated at the archetypal level to pursue the Life Game, human minds go to work creating tools to be more effective, and to make the world more fun and interesting. It takes mental, formative, and physical processes to design and manufacture computers. However, with humanly built computers having such a close parallel with the workings of the planes of existence, it seems evident that while we make small computers to serve our purposes, we nevertheless have been living inside a gigantic computer, long before we ever coined the term. As Above So Below. I've tried to make this point as "graphic" as possible with figure 10-1, which shows a writer at a computer doing spiritual illustrations.

< figure 10-1 about here, on full page >

Earlier I mentioned a spooky perception of a connection between computer programming and the original programming of the Life Game. These days I'm more certain than ever. In a vague recollection of the earliest stages of the Fall, outside the physical universe and not long after the Beginning of Time, there was a point at which most beings were well along in their descent into the Trance, but at varying levels of awareness. For a while, there were only a few who still knew what was going on, with consciousness having become just a mysterious black box for most. Then that devilish Dragon – an archetype created to make the Game much more interesting – caught up with the last of us, and we were well on our way into Experience.

A very long way down the long and winding road, with the process of Awakening underway, human life tends to move backward through stages paralleling the distant past. We may not fully realize it at first, but there can be a sense of déjà vu. It is quite remarkable to watch the changes, as the Awakening moves forward. I've had the fortune to be a Baby Boomer, and to have observed some of the most remarkable times in history for over a half century. When I completed college and started my first computer job, there was no obvious connection between computers and spirit. Most people drawn to one were not attracted to the other. I was one of the few exceptions. Within a couple of years I had become a mainframe systems programmer, a job I maintained for most of my career. I quickly learned the innards of those mammoth computers, down to the points where the hardware and software interacted. We in the systems section supported the application programmers. On mainframes, they were mostly concerned with writing dollars-and-cents reports for management, to be printed on green-bar paper. Word processing was done by secretaries using typewriters – not on computers at all. But the computer world was divided into the systems people who best understood the machines, the applications staff who made practical use of them, and the outside world to whom the computers were mysterious black boxes. Being metaphysical and having been working on past-life recall, I had a sense that this computer world had a spiritual significance, but at first it was very vague.

Other areas of life were specialized and separated from each other. The metaphysical community was small and not well known. Most religious people had not heard of metaphysics. The notion of holistic health – a unified approach to Body, Mind, and Spirit – had hardly been

conceived. Art was something you did on a canvas or in a sculpture studio. To most mystical and artistic types, computers were just cold machines that belonged in the business world.

Obviously, a great deal has changed to create today's holistic mindset. Ever since the Wizard gave Dorothy her own computer, they have evolved into essential tools for everyone from artists to ministers to mystics. People do their own word processing, from memos to book writing. Authors can easily make the ideas in their minds become graphic as pages full of pixels. And though the Dragon has yet to be slain, Apocalyptic processes are well underway; and an Awakening certainly has been occurring. It's nice, nowadays, not to be one of only a few who know what's really going on – let alone to have forgotten. That's gotten very, *very* old. A computer-literate and spirit-literate world should prove much more enjoyable to all of us awakening immortals.

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Aside from my funny drawings, it helps even more to get the Big Picture. I hope these thoughts have helped. And with Uranus in visual range just ahead, there's more excitement in store.

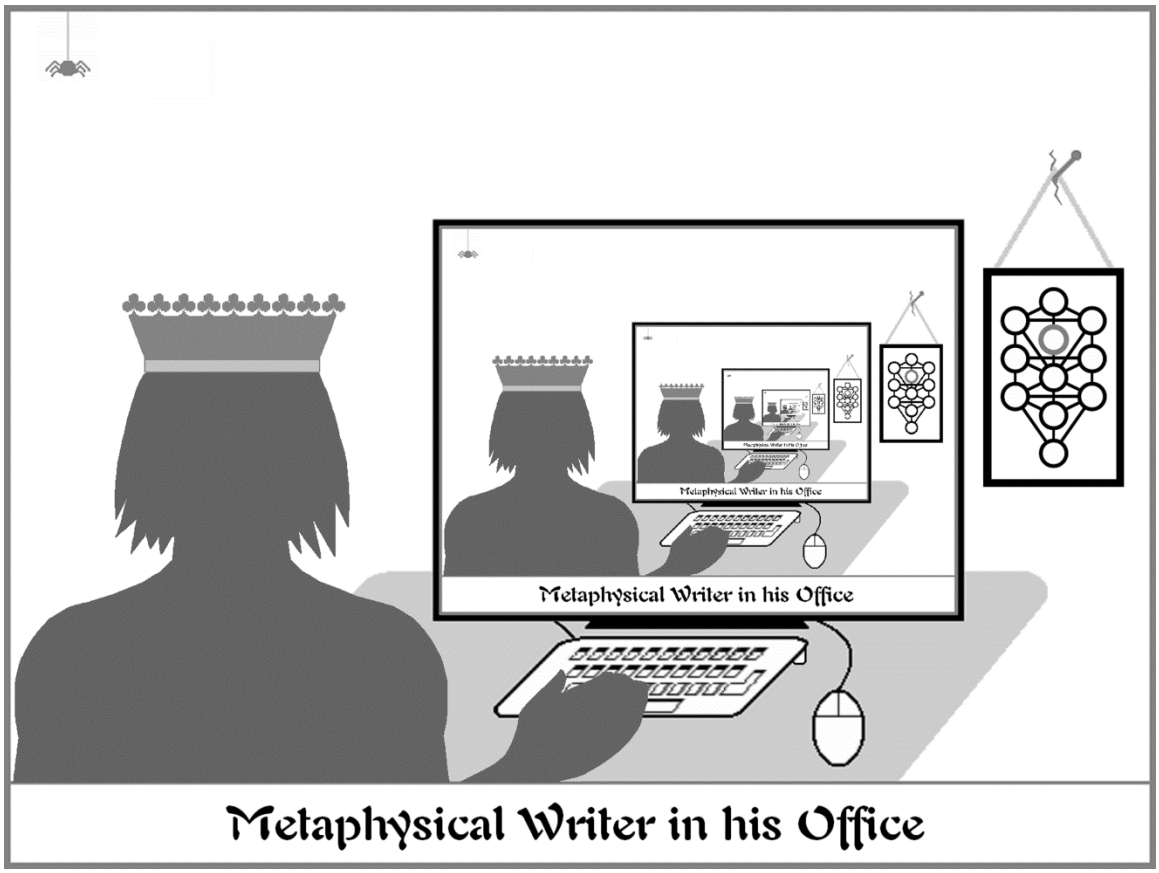

Figure 10-1: A Metaphysical Writer in his Office

Chapter 11

Prayer, Magic, and Miracles

Welcome to Uranus. In astrology, Uranus is considered the planet of Magic. The planet is associated with Chokmah – the male principal on the Tree of Life – which is considered to be outside of Time. With Binah, the female principal, Time begins along with its prime enforcer – the Dragon. Time adds heaviness and solidity to things. This makes any kind of magic more difficult. To do magic, it seems that one must somehow reach into the timeless and tap into Chokmah energy. In the physical universe, electromagnetism is a manifestation of Uranian energy, whereas the strong nuclear force that holds protons and neutrons together is a Binah manifestation. Nuclear matter gives the physical universe solidity. Electrons are more mobile. They can flow through circuits, independent of atoms, and work the earthly magic of computers and televisions. When thunderstorms occur, the Uranian energy acts independently to an unusually high degree, and can enhance astral or spiritual processes. The electrons and negative ions generated can lift moods. Telepathy is often higher during thunderstorms. But aside from spiritual theory and the whims of the physical universe, a study of metaphysics would be incomplete without a discussion of real, practical magic.

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With all our lengthy study of spiritual perception and understanding, is there anything you actually can *do* with this stuff? Spiritual curiosity seekers will want to know. Can it be used to better my life? Can I heal people with it? And for the mischievous: How can I make someone fall in love with me? Is there a spell I can use to make my boss fall over dead? Is it ethical if my spiritual intentions or actions affect other people? We'll take a look at each of these issues, in turn, after examining a few basics.

Legends about sorcerers, spells, and enchantments are greatly overblown. Tales of black lodges and invoking evil demons make good Halloween entertainment. They sometimes scare the bejeebers out of novice metaphysical readers who take them seriously, but I've found no basis for goblins outside of human psychology. You won't find much valid "secret knowledge" beyond the not-so-secret mystical religious traditions that we've been studying. Mystics of the past attempted to explore their natural spiritual powers, just as any of us can today. We hear a lot about the benefits of positive thinking. People want to gain better control over their lives by the use of intention. Traditionally, this has included prayer, magic, or even miracles. Prayer is a kind of "theurgy" – literally, "god-work" – invoking a higher power or god to get results. Some magical groups use ritual forms of theurgy, which is also called High Magic. The many rituals of Roman Catholicism are well-known examples of theurgy. Miracles usually are thought to be religious – acts of a higher power, or actions by some saint or Adept who invokes a higher power. But any attempt to influence the course of events, other than by purely physical means, can be referred to as magic in the broad sense of the word.

Magic is no substitute for physical work. In my experience, it won't carry in the groceries or clean up the house. But when physical or social affairs can easily go one way or another, our conscious desires and intentions are often enough to tip the scales. Personally, I'm not very enthralled with formal magic such as rituals and talismans, even though some people swear that they've gotten results by using them. Such things may be helpful to seekers by giving them more

confidence that they can influence things. But if they continue their spiritual work long enough, they will realize that *they* are the sources of the improvements. The formality and gadgets are just aids for expanding awareness, much like reciting affirmations. If people are attracted to them, my advice is to use them as long as they seem helpful. What will be more controversial is my view of prayer in the same light. Sure, there is higher power in the universe; but we infinite and immortal beings are the eyes, ears, arms, and hands of that power – and even its Judgment! Prayer may get results because it expresses our desires and intentions, and especially because those of good intent see justice and humanity in the "requested" results. If prayer seems helpful to you, then do it.

Beyond simple intention, my favorite mode of spiritual causation is what I like to call "practical life magic" (or PLM). Simply put, it is positioning one's life for what one wants to achieve. (Note: Certain other practitioners have labeled their specific practices "life magic" – usually capitalized. My use of "life magic" does not refer to any such practice or trademark.) People who feel sorry for themselves often let their lives sink into ruts that perpetuate the unwanted situation. Saddened by a lousy job or lack of a love life, they may waste hours in front of a television set. They may even feel that if the situation would improve, they would be energized and would feel like confronting their chores. This is an example of negative magic – typical of life in the old Fallen State. Good magic, in contrast, would impel them to get their affairs in order. A new love would necessitate a clean home in which to visit. A better job might demand more attention for a while, so catching up on other life responsibilities can make the new employment more timely. This is using self-discipline to counter depression. It is also gaining the cooperation of the universe by making oneself worthy of the reward sought, or by upholding one's end of the bargain. It helps if you're certain you're right, and see justice in the outcome. The most important part of practical life magic is to stay busy and press forward with your goals, even when the environment is not being as cooperative as you'd like. If you then balance your actions with thoughtful meditations and self-improvement, and have enough humility to upgrade your goals and strategy when needed, you're on the best Path to enlightenment that ever has existed, and well on your way to being an Adept. But you must know that as a spiritual being you are inherently worthy of successes, and of a life worth living. Suffering is just a part of the Trance. It sometimes can happen to the best of us during our Awakening; but the notion that we deserve it because of "Original Sin" is just part of the Original Lie!

There is nothing wrong with using spiritual intent for personal gain, but this can be difficult if you're contending with many fellow beings who also are worthy. An attempt to win a state lottery, for example, is often nullified by the intentions of countless other players, including those who don't believe in magic.

So what role might magic have in healing? For yourself, it can be part of a healthy lifestyle and holistic practices. Positive thinking is paramount. If you feel uncertain of your worthiness, find out why and get past it. Ask your Higher Self if there are positive corrections and adjustments you need to make. But stay busy and pursue your goals. A strong ambition, tempered with humanity, is some of the best holistic medicine. As for healing others, it's well-known that love is one of the most powerful healing tools. If someone you care about is having health problems, you can let them know of your best wishes. Too much sympathy can get in the way. But you may be able to encourage them to think more positively, and to apply the above-mentioned practices in their own lives. There also are several kinds of holistic energy work, such as Reiki and acupuncture, that could be regarded as types of healing magic.

It's okay to pray or meditate in an attempt to flow healing energy to another. However, there

are some limitations to be aware of. Some people who are ill may be dealing with karmic issues that are invisible to you, and often to them. There always are reasons for illnesses and other troubles; and until they are dealt with by the person affected, they will tend to persist or recur. A timely death is a natural mercy, and is a gateway for a person to move on to whatever is next on his or her spiritual path. People don't always have to be elderly to have valid – if often invisible – reasons for moving on to their next existence. Illness often is a precursor to death, and serves as part of the letting-go process. People always will attempt to assist those they care about. But an understanding of cause and effect in these matters can increase effectiveness, and also can help us to allow another's life to take its rightful course when called for.

Can I use magic to make someone fall in love with me? To begin with, understand that love IS magic. Remember Daath and higher spiritual romance from our Jupiter visit? For those blessed with this good fortune, it often can maximize health, and even can increase spiritual awareness by its way of penetrating the higher planes. More typical Yesod-based (sexual) romance may confer some of the same benefits, if the match is reasonably good. Spells and enchantments to invoke love are mostly ineffective. They sometimes might assert your intention and get under the skin of their target by a kind of psychological process – but don't expect them to get lasting results. Such attempts are petty at best, but the same can be said for indiscriminate sexual activity. For a romance to bloom and last, it will require two souls to contact each other in mutual love and respect, and with an open sharing of life purposes. When you really can *connect* with your partner – Higher Self to Higher Self – you're working the most effective love magic that exists.

And now about those death spells – wouldn't the Mafia love it? In nearly a half-century of metaphysical studies I've never found one. Magic to cause the untimely death of a healthy human is pure Halloween legend. However, in instances of self-defense, or when cosmic justice is at stake, a righteous intent might prevail. As in the movies, when the lives of the good guys are threatened, a criminal may slip and fall to his death at the last minute. Justice can go a long way in making any spiritual intent successful. Nevertheless, it's occurred to me that popularizing magic, even in the manner of this book, could become a lawyer's dream. When your grandfather expires, you now can file a wrongful-death lawsuit accusing someone you dislike of putting the whammy on him! Those issues aside, there are some valuable spiritual insights into this often misunderstood subject.

There are invisible spiritual processes, involving our Higher Selves, that usually precede death as its time approaches. They are part of "letting go." But the will to live or to die can play a tremendous role in the timing and circumstances. Those who are most willing to embrace a timely death usually suffer the least. Those who hold on beyond their time often have the least-dignified experiences, and cause hardship and anguish for the families that care for them.

When Granny is in a nursing home and not entirely lucid, her relatives begin to realize that her death is timely. With typical religious programming, they may feel guilty about those realizations. They begin to agree, timidly, that if God in His wisdom is ready to take her home, it could be a mercy for all concerned. They pray about the matter, which is a part of their letting-go. But their own life magic can influence the spiritual processes for better or worse, even if they are not aware of it. Some, for example, will leave Granny's home in perfect order, long after she's capable of living in it. They may as well expect her to hang on, because that's exactly what *they* are doing. In contrast, if they are pragmatic and begin to dismantle her old universe – more of their own letting-go – they may find that God is suddenly quite eager to welcome her.

The only deaths I've been really close to were those of my parents. However, they proved

great sources of insight to me regarding the related spiritual processes. My mother was born under the Cancer sign – and you know how the Crab likes to hang on! She kept herself alive until she was in hospice care, completely bed-ridden, mostly blind, and often having delusions. But it was only her 90-year old body and what was left of her mind that was in the nursing home. Her spirit was still in the house that she had been unable to live in for 2½ years. I felt it strongly whenever I was there. She passed away only six weeks after I disposed of the last of her stuff, and sold the place. Point made.

My father's passing a few years earlier was even more interesting. Some background is needed to appreciate it, so bear with me on the details. He had helped me get through college with a computer science degree decades earlier. He had been a business major. Technologically I was beyond him, but my work was very real to him and made him happy. My job was a part of his ego. Late in that career I was faced with two challenges. First, as the only child of aging parents living 50 miles away, it concerned me how I'd manage my computer job if major illnesses or deaths arrived. My mother was already disabled, and my father was suffering from congestive heart failure. He was not up to taking care of her and their home. He wanted to move to a retirement home, but she squelched that one fast. (Her karma eventually caught up with her!)

The second challenge is that I was ready for a serious career change, having begun metaphysical writing and wishing to turn full attention to the area. So I was happy to be among several who were laid off in a single day. I got my severance pay and pension – all I'd been waiting for. Only three months later, my father worsened and was briefly hospitalized. He was worn out, and as ready to die as anyone I've known. My mother – a fundamentalist – believed in Providence. She said that my job may have ended because illnesses or deaths were about to occur, with which I gently agreed. But I also sensed that my father's universe was beginning to shift, in part because of the shifts taking place in mine. He then surprised me by recovering a little for a few more months, even though still quite ill and requiring more special care at home. Things seemed stuck at the worst place for all concerned. I looked carefully at the spiritual flows – that's my way. Practical Capricorns – especially *spiritual* ones – want to know how things *really* work. How else are we Goats to live up to our reputations? If the mercy of Providence was in motion, then why was the universe hesitating?

Then it occurred to me that perhaps *I was hesitating*. Consciously, I had wanted the career change. But I'd built up a bit of an ego as a senior software engineer – not to mention a decent income. My office at home was full of mainframe computer books and materials that I'd collected over the years. My metaphysical books were in my bedroom. On an inspiration, I spent nearly a month disposing of all my old career materials – even purging vestiges of them from my desktop computer. I can tell you that the process did arouse considerable emotion. It was the death of a now-untimely ego, and the ascendance of a new one. I moved my metaphysical books into my office. I was telling the universe that I was willing only to move forward – no looking back. Most important, I had strengthened my spiritual Will by this unreserved assertion and commitment.

My father's health plunged again. I saw the lava flowing. Gee – this is intriguing! The day before he died I took him to his doctor, and then spent the night at his house. I knew how difficult it would be if he passed away when I was not there; and so I had a very strong feeling that the time should be *now*. Certain that it was the most benevolent and timely outcome, my spiritual vote was in the hat – but I wondered if the universe would cooperate. The next morning he got up before I did, spoke to my mother, and put away some dishes. He then told her he was going back to bed for a while. And in his nap, without a whimper, he relinquished the ghost. I

found him, informed my mother, and called 911. The place became a circus. All went well, but the rest is academic. I knew the outcome was for the best, but it was startling. I had been a knowing party to some of the more profound spiritual workings of the universe. It was a milestone in my spiritual growth, but it was a lot of responsibility to get used to.

At the time, I was attending a weekly Qabalah-based study group sponsored by a Rosicrucian-style fraternity – a lodge that also practices ritual theurgy. I let some of my friends there know, by email, that my father had passed away, and that I would miss a meeting; but I gave no details. The next meeting I attended was led by a senior lodge member, who I had not spoken to personally about the recent event. This gentleman had strong opinions about spiritual ethics, but was almost too psychic for his own good. In his lecture, he worked in snide remarks about black magic, death spells, and misuse of esoteric knowledge – even though the scheduled lecture was not specifically on those topics. I didn't bat an eye, but probably was the only one present who knew he was referring to me. He kept jokingly digging me in the ribs with similar remarks, especially when I went out with the group for coffee; and he spread rumors about me in the group. I was amused. Feeling that my spiritual affairs were none of his business, I never discussed the matter with him directly. Instead, I made flippant remarks about how death angels are God's spiritual hit men; and I mimicked their gangster language. Honestly, I don't know what esoteric knowledge he thought I misused – and I don't know any "death spells." If he knows of one, he didn't bother to share it – or say whether he had ever used it successfully. But now he can read this, and form what opinion he will. If changing careers and throwing out computer books is a crime, then put on the handcuffs! If awareness of spiritual cause and effect is a crime, then that gentleman should leave metaphysical work. The great lesson is how the universes of spiritual beings are so highly intertwined. I was ready for a major change, and ended a personal era. My father was similarly ready, and ended the same era in synchrony. And I have nothing but appreciative memories for the contributions he made to my life.

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The mentioned fraternity has its own intriguing standard for the ethics of magic and miracles. They maintain that theurgy should never be used to influence the life of another without first obtaining explicit permission. A healing ritual would be an example. They also claim that so-acting without permission is a work of black magic, regardless of how merciful the cause. Even praying for the welfare of someone with whom one disagrees is an act of black magic! A glance at the political leanings of that bunch brings the matter down to Earth. "Only with permission" smacks heavily of liberalism. Liberals can imagine no greater evil than interfering in another's affairs without his or her permission, and "tough love" is not in their vocabulary.

With conservatives it's a different matter. Conservatives not only feel free to interfere in the lives of others, but consider it their moral obligation to do so. My fundamentalist parents directed black magic at me every day of their lives. They thanked the Lord for my computer career – ironically, because it was secular. However, I'm certain they prayed that I'd quit studying astrology and renounce my belief in reincarnation. But alas, their use of the Dark Arts to meddle in my affairs did no good – which is also to say no harm – as I emerged from the ordeal completely unscathed. Nevertheless, I expect them both to bloom spiritually in Apocalyptic America, during their next lifetime. It would be fulfilling should I manage to spot and recognize them during my current one.

True black magic would be bettering oneself at the expense of one's fellow men and women, lowering their awareness, and pushing them deeper into the Trance. Politicians have that one down to a science – it's called "campaigning." Religion should be the antidote, but all too often

is the blind leading the blind – which can apply to some metaphysical circles as well. The spiritually insecure accrue big egos and the esteem of their followers by prescribing right conduct for all others. And it should be no surprise that the most aware and free beings on Earth become their primary targets.

There is no need to have a more-restrictive ethical standard for spiritual assertion than for physical action. After all, a spiritual being cannot act without *intending*. The best ethical standard for all miracle workers is the same as for all of life's affairs: amass what wisdom you can, and Use Your Judgment.

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Regarding Uranian-Chokmah energy vs. Binah energy, remember that the former is associated with the left brain, and the latter with the right. When you plan to accomplish things, *deciding* to, with your left brain, is the easy part. But between you and the physical universe, there is also the subconscious. The latter is associated with the right brain because of deep emotions and feelings that may be involved, sometimes without your being aware of them. So convincing your subconscious to cooperate is sort of like getting atomic nuclei to cooperate with the more mobile electrons. What compounds the matter is that people's subconsciouses are rather telepathic. So if you're trying to steer your life in a desired direction, but the universe does not seem to be cooperating, you may be up against resistance in the collective subconscious, or in the subconsciouses of individuals with whom you're closely connected. The subconscious is the domain of the Dragon. He is a projection of the collective fears and self-doubts of the race, and is primed to resist spiritual independence. It can be helpful to ask yourself if you have any lingering emotional reservations about your plans, even if those reservations are irrational. By confronting and cleaning up your own personal demons, you may be able to get the universe to cooperate. It also can be helpful to heal up unresolved emotional problems in relationships, where possible. In doing these things you shrink the Dragon, and make it that much easier for other spirits to be free as well. Shortly after the Beginning of Time, the Dragon was programmed to police spiritual causation, and keep souls' experience as humanized as possible. One of the Dragon's prime intents is to limit the effectiveness of our use of our native spiritual intention, even implanting guilt complexes over its use (doctrine of "original sin"), while leaving us incarnate immortals to do everything via our physical bodies – "by the sweat of our brows," as it were. Rest assured, the Dragon and his demons are synonyms for "the angels that guard the gates of Eden." The Apocalypse, in contrast, is precisely about recovering full, knowing use of all our spiritual faculties, and reclaiming Eden as our own turf. In divine Truth, it always has been. The programmed fears of some fundamentalists toward "supernatural" causation serve the Dragon very well, as do the laughable ethical standards of a few pompous metaphysical groups.

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This tour of Uranus is our last planetary stop before heading home. So it's back into the reaches of space with a course toward Earth. And on the way back, we can examine a number of interesting perspectives from humankind's spiritual history.

Chapter 12

Return to Kansas – Rainbow's End

Spiritual astronauts who use scientific inquiry to examine their world's religions have a real pot of gold to discover in exploring that rich heritage. Folks still in the grip of fear-based religion, or simply convinced that the religion they grew up with is the last word on the spiritual, seem helpless to share in that treasure that lies barely beyond their doorstep. But with our warp engines at full thrust as we head back to our home planet, we metaphysical pioneers can have a look at Earth's great religious history, as space and time fly past us just outside the craft's hull.

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The metroplex in which I've spent most of my adult life has a Hindu temple and an excellent vegetarian Indian restaurant, run by the International Society of Krishna Consciousness. Yet, it was only in the autumn of 2008 that I made my first trip there, on a tour with a metaphysical group. I'd heard of it for decades, but had not been motivated to check it out. The Háre Krishnas had once acquired some notoriety for aggressive solicitation in airports. My impression now is that they are past that phase, but the old perceptions had held me back. The food was very good, even though inexpensive. Service was courteous. No one tried to convert us, but our friendly guide gave us a great tour of the temple; and we saw a presentation involving some rituals.

The beauty of the art and murals in the temple was overwhelming. It was a Hindu version of the Sistine Chapel. I already was somewhat familiar with the Hindu pantheon, and so recognized the images of some of the gods, like Vishnu the Preserver and Shiva the Destroyer. There was one I didn't recognize at first. He was a crowned king flying around on top of a big bird. He had four faces, so as to see in every direction; and each face had a white beard. Through a process of elimination, I thought that he might be Brahma the Creator. When I asked our guide to tell me about him, I found that my hunch was spot-on. He explained that Lord Brahma is the son of Vishnu. (Note – some Hindu traditions explain Brahma's origins differently.) He also said that Brahma created the universe, and that his long life span is equal to that of the universe.

With that, I connected two of the Hindu gods to Greco-Roman deities. Uranus and Vishnu are very old gods, and timeless in function. Their respective sons are the Greek Kronos and the Hindu Brahma. Kronos (Saturn) is said to be the god of time – basically the originator of time from the timeless. Kronos is often depicted as an old, bearded man, in contrast to later deities who usually have more youthful appearances. The aging and bearded appearance of Brahma also shows him as Father Time, as he created the universe. Vishnu, Brahma's father, is considered a sky god, as is Uranus, father of Kronos-Saturn. In Qabalistic terms, Brahma and Kronos are equivalent to Binah; and their fathers – Vishnu and Uranus – correspond to Chokmah. The Greco-Roman and Qabalah parallel goes up a bit further. Uranus is said to be the son of Gaea – the early Earth goddess who came after the still earlier god, Chaos. We get the common usage of the word "chaos" from this ancient god, who presided over the primordial disorder. Chokmah was emanated from Kether, the Crown. Gaea and Kether are the base of the Tree of Life, which is rooted in Chaos or Ain Soph – "infinite nothing." Yet another Hindu god, Brahman, is said to be the ultimate deity – the wholly transcendent source of all the rest of creation, gods, and being. Brahman appears to be identical to the Ain in Qabalah – the ultimate No-thing from which all else emanated.

From modern cosmology we are familiar with the four dimensions of spacetime, as space and time are closely related. The creator of time would also be the creator of space, and of the physical universe in general. In a little more research on Brahma, I read that his four faces represent the four Vedas, which are ancient Hindu documents. But I strongly suspect that the four faces originally might have suggested multiple directions in space – or even the four dimensions of spacetime. How could the four faces of Brahma, who created the physical universe, be symbolic of four documents that are part of a human religious tradition? It's perhaps not only Western monotheistic religions that have drifted from their metaphysical roots. Most religions that are not just spin-offs of another originated as wise philosophy and science. Using our X-ray vision, it's quite easy to see that Brahma (in addition to his Binah/Time attributes) is the Adam Kadmon of the physical plane. So the End of Time is the end of Brahma's long lifespan, as the guide indicated. Of course, we can thank our friend the Dragon for digesting the meat of spiritual science, and spitting out the skeletons of truth that survive as religious dogma and fundamentalism. Another Hindu term, Atman, refers to the divine spiritual essence of each individual – essentially the "god within." Ultimate salvation is said to be the realization that the Atman of each of us is identical to Brahman – the supreme deity. Discovering the god within has long been the essence of every major mystical tradition, and virtually all New Age spiritual practices. Modern, metaphysical versions of Christianity, such as Unity, espouse this concept, often referring to the "Christ within" or the "Christ center" of our being. This potent and liberating concept is the antithesis of all fundamentalism. The suppression and fear of this concept is the essence of the Dragon's venom.

The Dragon's rampages have been quite varied from era to era, and from one major geographic area of the Earth to another. It's evident that these large divisions of culture have very differing roles and destinies in the Game of Life. In the Far East, the Dragon has manifested in recent centuries as poverty, military struggles, and endless dictatorships. Religions actually have maintained something of their metaphysical roots, but suffer from economics and clashes with communism. A glance at the Yin and Yang of Taoism indicates the respective female and male forces at work in spirit and in material life. Buddhism is a very esoteric and meditational practice, in contrast with the dogmatic religions of the West. Yet, ironically, the West is at once the forefront of the world's prosperity – at least until the Great Recession of 2007 – and the region in which the Dragon, himself, has assumed the cloak of religion. The Middle East is the West's flashpoint – the source of some of the best and worst of spiritual enlightenment, and of religious fanaticism and militance.

The Dragon hasn't been uniformly mean to planet Earth throughout time. The Age of Aries – roughly the final 2000 years BCE – was something of a golden age. The Far East had its dynasties and empires, relative prosperity, and achievements in philosophy and art. The Middle East had its heyday in philosophy and theology. Hinduism, as explored above, has strong metaphysical roots and is an ancient culture of wisdom.

The religion of ancient Egypt is formidable in its metaphysics and beauty. The god Osiris and the goddess Isis correspond directly to Chokmah and Binah in Qabalah. The myth that Osiris was slain by his brother, and later assumed charge of the underworld and afterlife, is symbolic of the effect of Time and the Dragon on consciousness. Chokmah is timeless, and Binah is the origin of Time. The relegation of Osiris to hidden existence is an expression of how Time has suppressed many of the magical properties of Spirit. Western metaphysical schools have idealized the "lifting of the Veil of Isis." This corresponds to taming the Dragon and regaining much spiritual awareness and power. Egyptians venerated Ra, the Sun god, realizing the actual and symbolic

importance of the Sun in physical life and religion. Ra corresponds to Tiphareth, the sphere of the Sun, on the Tree of Life. The higher god Amon-Ra, or "hidden sun," corresponds to Kether the Crown, and physically to the Big Bang. The god Horus is the child of Osiris and Isis. Over time, Horus came to be perceived identically to Ra, and was pictured similarly, with the head of a falcon atop a man's body. Thus Ra-Horus is both the god of the Sun and the child of the primary male and female deities, showing a doubly strong connection to Tiphareth of Qabalah.

The works of Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, and other ancient Greek philosophers shape Western ideals and culture to this day. During our Mars visit we examined Hermetic philosophy in detail, and saw that its wisdom is a fusion of Greek and Egyptian philosophy and theology. The Greeks and the Hermetists were among the finest holistic schools that this planet has known, dealing seamlessly with science, medicine, philosophy, and spirit.

A couple of chapters back, when discussing computers, I hinted that social consciousness is moving backward through phases of the Trance. In fact, Apocalyptic awakening has been in the works for a very long time. The Piscean Age – roughly the first two millennia CE – is the phase in which Earth culture has been passing back upward through the coils and throat of the Dragon, toward the goal of liberation. However, this means that, in passing, we've been dramatizing the effects of the Dragon's poison even more intensely. And during our visit to Saturn, we saw that a major feature of that poison is suppression of the Divine Feminine, and of esoteric knowledge in general. It's not surprising, then, that the religion of ancient Egypt disappeared into the Dragon's coils during the early Piscean. A collapse into monotheism and its One God – always male – facilitates this very suppression. Of course, most religions point back to some transcendent unity of divine consciousness from which all else was emanated – the one ultimate deity. Yet, when the other gods of their pantheons are understood metaphysically, they are symbols of the highest detailed wisdom about consciousness and universes. However, when polytheistic religions lose perspective of their scientific origins, then their hosts of gods and goddesses, with all their myths and stories, begin to look increasingly like superstition. Furthermore, when a religion focuses only on the "one" ultimate deity and forgets its metaphysics, it loses even the symbolic legacy from which ancient wisdom might be regained. The mono-types, of course, turn up their noses at the poly-types as being ignorant and backward. Is it true that those who know the least often have the most to say?

Judaism lies on the cusp of that split, and is a curious mix. On one hand, its Qabalist doctrine is easily the best scientific analysis of masculine and feminine spirit ever developed. However, it's telling that during most of the Age of Pisces, Qabalistic study was not actively encouraged for the broad Jewish community. In particular, in many parts of that community, Qabalah study often was restricted exclusively to married males who had reached middle age. On the other hand, the exoteric (outward, non-mystical) component of Judaism was the earliest purveyor of Western monotheism. Loss of the metaphysical inhibits mysticism, and promotes dogma and piety. Many Orthodox Jews today won't flip an electric light switch on the Sabbath – because it's *work*! Outsiders may look on such piety as harmless, or almost noble. After all, Jews of all sects are historically intellectual, hard-working, and peace loving; and are not known for blowing up Baptist churches or Háre Krishna restaurants. However, when piety is substituted for living spiritual awareness, it is never harmless. Even in recent years, reports have made the news about incidents near Judaism's Western Wall in Israel. Jews often gather to pray by their holiest site. But when men and women of Reform Judaism have stood praying together (gasp!), they often have been pelted with mud and rocks by their offended Orthodox brethren. Caught up in their dramatization of the Trance, these most pious of the devout have their whole worldview

threatened by this modest resurgence of the Divine Feminine. Fortunately for Judaism, it never has postulated the actual arrival of a messiah.

Christianity picked up that ball and ran with it. Messiahs can make the Trance really complicated, especially if they're also viewed as a deity. Jesus of Nazareth was a Jew, and was a religion-based social reformer. Tradition has it that he had studied with the Essenes – a monastic sect of Judaism that generally excluded women. After his death, some sects interested in his teachings were mystical and esoteric – an example being the Gnostics. But with the Dragon rearing his head as the Age of Pisces progressed, the Council of Nicaea in the early fourth century CE squelched those aspects of Jesus's legacy. There is, today, much popular speculation about Jesus's actual teachings, life, and intent. But speculation is just that. Early popes and councils carved the holy scriptures of Christianity into stone, and set the course for the religion's future. Whatever the shortcomings of historic Christianity, it is doubtful that the bulk of the blame for them should be attributed to Jesus. The definition of Christian doctrine in the early centuries was much more of a power grab by religious and secular leaders than an attempt at faithful and thoughtful preservation of the teachings of the Nazarene. From this perspective, while Jesus had the effect of changing history, many of those changes, in the long run, were a product of the bureaucrats and politicians who were happy to ride on his coattails. (It seems that in another sense, little has changed in 2000 years.) The first product of the bureaucrats was the notion that Jesus was the long-prophesied messiah of Judaism. But with Jews being cold to that idea from the outset – how very arrogant to tell people of another religion and ethnicity that anyone is the fulfillment of one of their own prophesies! The real kicker, though, is the divinity issue – and one third of godhead, no less.

So here's how things stacked up early-on for what became the predominant religion of the Western World. Christianity was a spin-off of Judaism, and had no metaphysical roots – at least none that survived Nicaea. Embrace of the Divine Feminine was never a part of its known and official doctrine. Even with a Trinity, it essentially was a religion of masculine monotheism. It had a messiah who was God incarnate. His teachings – or what were officially mandated to be his teachings – were beyond all question. Because Jesus was the incarnation of the One God, he obviously was the Messiah – not only for Christian devotees, but for all cultures in every nook and cranny of planet Earth. This gave the new devout a mandate that Judaism never had. It was the divine duty of Christians to convert every human on Earth to this new faith; and even a failure to evangelize could endanger the eternity of the otherwise faithful. The Middle Ages were not times of economic or cultural prosperity. There were only two games in town – war and religion – with the two generally going hand-in-hand. The Crusades and the horrors of the Inquisition were inevitable in that era. They were the true colors of a monotheistic, messiah-based religion in a culture that knew no other basis for its meaning and existence. And they were the glorious manifestation of the Dragon in his Sunday best.

Eventually, Christianity got kinder and gentler. That's not necessarily because it somehow got back to its true roots. Irrational dramatizations get old, and people get tired of them. The Dragon began to loosen his grip. The Renaissance was the period in which Western culture began to find new meaning for its existence. The arts, sciences, and philosophy took off. Democracy eventually began to develop. Women later became a part of that democracy. Religious fanaticism waned, because an enlightened secular culture was beginning to bloom. Metaphysical societies grew; and they became visible and open to the general public during the 20th century. It's been a long, slow climb to Apocalyptic times. In keeping with the secular cultural changes, Christianity altered its focus to promote love and a cooperative society. Is this

more in keeping with Jesus's original teachings? Maybe. Was Mary Magdalene his wife and the mother of his children, as some now say? Maybe, who knows? But more important should be the realization that in every era, humankind has made God in its image – usually while denying it. Jesus's most devout contemporary followers have already decided firmly what they believe, and will condemn any perceived deviations as heresy. If Jesus returned today as a religious teacher, they could learn nothing from him and probably would reject him outright as some kind of kook. Fortunately, there are a great many in the Christian community today who are not fundamentalists, and are open to learning new truths from anyone who speaks with credibility. Many are into metaphysical studies. All these many forward-looking Christians have my greatest respect. They and their forward-looking Jewish brethren are some of the finest citizens on the planet.

During the Piscean Age, while exoteric religion was going monotheistic, esoteric metaphysical movements went underground. One of the longest-standing traditions is a collection of mystical fraternities, generically called Rosicrucians. Their primary symbol is a rose on a cross. Rosicrucianism began at least by the Middle Ages, but some claim that its roots go back to the first century CE. The cross indicates their reverence for Jesus as a spiritual leader, but they also draw very heavily on Qabalah and Hermetism. They often draw, as well, from the symbolism of ancient Egypt's gods and goddesses. One common feature of these orders is a complex system of ritual theurgy, or High Magic, invoking angels and divinity by names drawn from Qabalah and Judaism. Another common feature is an initiatory grade system, whereby their members climb upward, sphere by sphere, on the Tree of Life, in courses of study and practice that usually take many years. Until recent centuries, Rosicrucian orders were mostly in Europe. A famous one, The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, was founded in England in the late 1800s, and eventually spread to New York in the early 20th century. Two of its deceased members, Israel Regardie and Dion Fortune, remain popular authors on Qabalah and metaphysical topics. Some of their works are listed in appendix B – Bibliography and Suggested Reading. While the original Golden Dawn was eventually disbanded, several major Rosicrucian orders exist today. At least some of these hold public classes in which non-members are welcome; and these can be good venues to study such things as Qabalah, Hermetics, and Astrology. One prominent order, Builders of the Adytum, offers books and posters in its online store. For more information, see appendix E – Websites of Interest.

Rosicrucian orders vary considerably in their character. Traditionally, many of their rituals and teachings are kept secret, although a few recently formed orders have begun practicing openly. In some orders, the members sign oaths stipulating that if they ever break their obligations, including secrecy, they agree that the spiritual Powers that Be will nullify all their own spiritual powers – essentially casting them into the Outer Darkness and leaving their lives on the rocks. It seems that the fundamentalists don't enjoy a monopoly on mind control! Since their lists of obligations usually are kept secret until an impressed student eventually asks for initiation, it's very difficult for curious public to examine them. When I attended a public lecture held by one of these orders, their Steward (international chief, Grand Poobah, or what-have-you) let it slip out that their members were under oath never to criticize any particular religion. Another member later acknowledged to me that the Steward could get by with revealing things that the others could not. This occurred when someone asked his opinion about Scientology. It seems that he had an opinion, but felt obligated to use considerable restraint in expressing it. I'm sure that he did not want to set a poor example for his Fraters and Sorors.

As for Scientology: From reading books written by its founder, L. Ron Hubbard, it's

apparent that some of the subject's basic axioms reflect Hermetic philosophy, which Hubbard undoubtedly studied. This is consistent with various reported anecdotes about his contact with some of the original Golden Dawn figures in his early years. The Rosicrucian influence may go further. Scientology has a chart of grades through which its members progress – in this case, not by meditation and initiatory ritual, but primarily through therapeutic religious counseling called "auditing." Its halfway point seems to be the state of "Clear," which is suggestive of Tiphareth awareness on the Qabalistic Tree of Life. Its top level is "Operating Thetan" – roughly translated "adept spirit" in Rosicrucian terms – and is suggestive of Kether awareness at the top of the Tree. Scientology is one of the world's more controversial religions. Curious readers can find plenty of relevant material – pro and con – by browsing the Web.

Another fraternity – distantly related to Rosicrucians – of considerable historical importance to the history of America and the West is the Masons. They're also known as Free and Accepted Masons, or Freemasons. Masonry is thought to have its roots in the late 1500s. Its membership requires a general belief in a supreme being. Historically, many members have also been Christian, but that's not a requirement. The Masons have a strong metaphysical tradition akin to Qabalah. A couple of their symbols are the two pillars of Jachin (yah·CHEEN, "ch" as in "loch") and Boaz, which traditionally stood at the front of Solomon's temple. These have respective masculine and feminine attributes, and bear a strong resemblance to the Pillars of Mercy and Severity in the Qabalistic Tree of Life. Masons traditionally have viewed the metaphysical as an initiatory and cultural heritage; and are not recently known for promoting in-depth, intellectual study of spiritual matters. However, their metaphysical symbols and ideals have promoted a strong sense of balance. Many of its members have been statesmen, or were otherwise prominent in civic matters, and include several of America's revered founding fathers. Their Masonic idealism is certain to have been a strong influence in their decisions to form the government of the new nation as a democracy, rather than start a new monarchy or other arrangement. We'll look at these issues in more detail, including some of their more famous names, in the next chapter.

In the 20th century and on into the 21st, the world is reconfiguring in a fascinating way. The Third World, once abundant with colorful empires and ancient spiritual wisdom, has rampant poverty; and is increasingly monotheistic and fundamentalist – whether Islam or Christianity. The notable exception is communist China, with a controlled economy and its tradition of keeping all religions on very short leashes. The West, in contrast, is prosperous – apart from its relatively recent stumbles – and gradually is reviving the metaphysical in its religious and social ideals. Aside from the deeper studies of Qabalah and Hermetics, thousands of holistic, metaphysical, and self-help groups today provide an ever-growing opportunity for social networking and enlightenment. It is these positive developments, with the winning stars lining up on the cultural slot machine, that suggest that the West is on a course for Apocalyptic awakening.

That awakening does have a challenge, however, on entry to the third millennium. There is an unfortunate polarization between the religious Right and the metaphysical Left. Those on the Right are a bastion of wholesome family values, but adhere too much to the past with extremes that alienate moderates. Some are skeptical of any holistic enlightenment. In contrast, New Age metaphysical groups and some liberal churches often attract a preponderance of leftists who are more than happy to throw all traditional Western values out the door. They're happy to hijack metaphysics as a tool to promote extreme liberalism and globalism. They try to make liberalism a synonym for spiritual development. I've attended a few presentations in which the speaker touted the rise of the Divine Feminine as part of the process of restoring balance to the spiritual.

Then – almost in the next breath – she'd say, or at least imply, that the feminine is better or more evolved than the masculine. But as we've seen during our space tour, legitimate metaphysics encourages balance, rather than polarization or extremism. It's one thing to attain wisdom through appreciation of the world's enlightened root religions. It's quite another to glorify all present-time cultures, including radical fundamentalists that hate the West's freedom, and to claim that the values of all cultures should receive equal respect. Making all-inclusiveness the ultimate Western value is a certain formula for cultural suicide. These polarizing difficulties are symptoms of cultural change in progress, but amount to some challenging demons to get by if we hope to reenter Eden. It's important for citizens with balanced and wholesome values to embrace the joys of metaphysical wisdom, and to make these movements work for them rather than against. Just as the Middle Pillar of the Tree of Life is the Pillar of Equilibrium, so it is the salvation of Western culture to rehabilitate the great Center Spectrum of its social consciousness.

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Well, it's been fun. With our metaphysical space tour nearing an end, we now see our home planet looming up in the viewer. It's time to walk again on our native soil with the same feet, but to see our world through some new esoteric eyes. So be prepared for the perception that, in some very important ways, we'll be viewing Planet Earth accurately for the first time.

Chapter 13

Awake on Earth – Apocalypse and Armageddon

Mystical space tours can be addictive. Since each of us are infinite and immortal spiritual beings, cruising closer to our true native realms can be exciting and comforting. We may even feel some reservations about returning to Terra Firma. However, each of us recently incarnated into the human world to have adventures and learn lessons; and to carry out a personal, higher mission that will leave the world a better place for ourselves and others. Raising our heads into the spiritual clouds may help us to recall and clarify our personal missions, and also may provide tools and insights that will increase our competence in all our pursuits and activities. But getting our feet back on the ground allows these accomplishments to be real and fulfilling, rather than just mental pipe dreams of what might be.

Getting back our land legs can take a little effort and reorientation. That vertical column of vibrations just ahead is known as a "lamp post." These physical bodies, which we're relearning to operate, are composed of similar vibrations. And all of these vibratory objects interact with each other by some deeply engrained rules of the earthly realm. These rules are known as the Laws of Physics. So unless you're really, really good, an attempt to pass directly through the lamp post can result in some very uncomfortable trauma called a "knot on the head."

Those inhabitants who seem to be walking around in some kind of Trance are the natives of this world – or so they've come to believe. Your first impulse may be to help them. However, that can take considerable restraint and diplomacy. Any suggestion that they might be asleep can cause some of them to become defensive, and even belligerent. The best way to help them is to be gentle and patient. When they're ready, they'll seek out an appropriate space tour and begin their Awakening. As each of them becomes One of Us, we can welcome them and share old times. But now that we've sufficiently recovered our land legs, it's time for an enlightened look at the gyrations of Earth's civilization. Noting a few highlights of the planet's past can help to clarify its present.

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During the return voyage we noted that Western civilization has been in an awakening process for quite some time. An early sign of progress was the signing of the Magna Carta in 1215 CE by King John. It essentially was an agreement between the king and his nobles to resolve some conflicts and avoid rebellion. However, it often is considered the root of what eventually evolved into Western democracy. The Renaissance, beginning in the 15th century, brought a stagnant Europe out of the Middle Ages. Arts and sciences took off, along with a great renewed interest in the classical philosophy of the ancient Greeks and Romans. The Protestant Reformation in the 16th century broke Rome's monopoly on Western Christianity. It also reestablished the right of the faithful to interpret scripture for themselves, and to seek a personal relationship with the divine, rather than leaving all interpretation and guidance to clergy. Even with a long way still to go, this was the rebirth of the metaphysical Phoenix from the spiritually dead ashes left by the Dragon. Anglo-European culture was lightening up. The religious pie was now divided between the Catholics, the Church of England, and the Lutherans. But the monarchies, social class structure, and much of the religious authoritarianism of the late Piscean Age remained intact. These conditions still were not optimal for the great Spiritual Awakening to

occur.

Do you remember the most important spiritual principle that was identified during our recent space voyage? That principle is personal responsibility for one's experiences and destiny. Too much authority gets in the way of freedom to choose. Too much social structure gets in the way of responsibility. The rich and powerful are propped up by the working class. The workers, in turn, are too overwhelmed to create meaningful personal destinies, just trying to survive while supporting the rich. Everyone in such a culture is partially enslaved by the Dragon, including the fat cats who seem happy to serve him.

America-to-be was just far enough away and sufficiently isolated to give the Dragon a serious run for his money – but not without a fight. America's initial success was due to a combination of who came and what they left behind. Since the Renaissance, the West had established itself as the most prosperous culture on Earth. Having emerged from its Dark Ages, it showed its true colors in the late Piscean as fiercely independent, personally responsible, creative, and freedom-loving. Humans of such a mindset have no need to hold each other down. They love, and prefer to live with, other free beings like themselves. They create their wealth and prosperity by rolling up their sleeves and getting their hands dirty. When they share their wealth by hiring peers, they give their employees the opportunity for advancement and prosperity as well. The early immigrants to the New World brought their creative drive and personal responsibility with them. They left behind the old social structure that had been cramping their style.

The American Revolution was bloody, and very costly in terms of American lives. It also was the price of freedom, and of the nation's continued chance for its rightful destiny. The form of the new government was not a given. George Washington, for example, might well have been crowned king had he desired it. Politicians, historically, have been fiercely protective of their special interests and personal agendas. America's founding fathers went squarely and seriously for democracy – something that stands against any and all special interests. That's partly because they were leaders of a new nation reveling in the glory of its independence. There was another factor, however. A number were Freemasons – two of the more famous being George Washington and Benjamin Franklin. Of course, most of the Founders also were Christian. However, all the kingdoms of Europe were Christian, and kings traditionally have claimed that their right to rule is granted directly by God. The Masonic ideal of balance, and the love of freedom inherent in most esoteric societies, were undoubtedly major influences in the founding of American democracy. This was one of those major cusps in history at which the spirit of a culture decides to create its future, and sends the wounded Dragon limping away in a trail of blood.

The emerging nation was not without its problems and missteps. As certain of the established corporations grew, some of their executives realized that hiring their American peers was their largest single expense. Some of them got the brilliant idea of importing labor from other cultures of the Third World that could be induced to work for a pittance. And when even one corporation finds such a way to cut its costs, all the others have to follow suit in order to be competitive. Have I skipped to the third millennium? Not at all! I'm referring to the institution of slavery in the nation's South beginning in the 1600s, and its staffing with indigenous Africans. Institutionalizing an underclass of any kind was untimely for the West, and was culturally damaging. It is patently un-American, as it flies in the face of personal responsibility – a hallmark of American culture and destiny.

In the mid-1800s slavery was legally ended. The Dems and the GOP already were on the

scene, and it's interesting to note how they've played their hands in the matter. The Democrats were the party of the South that supported slavery. Lincoln's Republican Party was personal-responsibility minded, and supported abolition. Demons work through egos; and when dislodged, they always try to make a comeback. The Dem-demons survived by transforming themselves into their Hermetic opposites. Becoming the party of the poor and downtrodden, the Democrats proceeded once again to institutionalize an underclass, by creating massive welfare and entitlement programs. These also are patently un-American, as they stand entirely against personal responsibility. Modest welfare, with reasonable limits, could be viewed as helping someone get back up when they're down. That's not the mindset of the American welfare state. When the going gets tough, the victim mindset is to sue the government because its handout isn't big enough. Nevertheless, the Republicans don't deserve all the kudos. Today the Dems are moderately supportive of American labor, and at least half-heartedly resist the importation of foreign labor and the exportation of jobs. The Republicans, having decided that personal responsibility applies only to their big corporate donors, now lack even the slightest regard for established American culture and posterity; and they see the Earth as one big personnel pool.

Even with some problems and missteps, America continued to grow toward her spiritual destiny. The Apocalyptic alarm clock was set to go off around 1950. The following tale is how things ideally *should* have gone – keeping in mind that big plans often hit big snags. The Prince and Princess – the spiritual archetypes of the awakening American psyche – were to incarnate in the mid-20th century as the heart and soul of the Baby-Boom generation. The young Prince would bring a scientific attitude back into the spiritual community. He'd lead the way in dispelling the fear-based religions of the pre-Boomers, and open up all spiritual issues to healthy questioning and free debate. As he matured, he'd develop the Chokmah wisdom needed to guide the New Age. The transition would cause a crisis in sorting out the true values of America and the West. The maturing Prince would lead the way through that crisis, and help the culture to stand strong against all less-evolved elements within and without. Meanwhile, the young Princess would begin to restore active awareness of the Divine Feminine. As she matured, she'd promote holistic health practices and responsible attitudes toward the environment – areas in which the steak-and-cigarette pre-Boomers were clueless. Her Binah insight would balance economic policies as well. Free enterprise and competition would be balanced with social programs that would lead the vulnerable back to personal responsibility. She and the Prince, of course, would fall in love and marry. With the Dragon slain and the Trance dispelled, rightful gender harmony would be restored at all levels of consciousness. The Spirit and the Bride would restore the Water of Life to America and the West, and eventually to all of planet Earth. And Divine Order would be restored to the planet's civilization in all its glory.

So what *actually* happened? Most people can read the foregoing and acknowledge that many of those processes have been occurring since the 1950s. If struggling, they are at least works in progress. But harmony? Let's face it: Western politics and international relations are in the throes of Armageddon – the Apocalyptic battle between the divine and the demonic forces. And, of course, all factions believe that God is squarely on their side. The Serpent/Dragon is not just going to roll over and play dead, and his demons guarding the gates of Eden seem intent on battle to the death. One reason that major social change is difficult is that many people in high places – like the popes and monarchs of the past – make their living off of the Trance. Another reason has to do with the mechanics of spirit and creation. What took place in the early 20th century might well have been predictable from Qabalah.

During our Jupiter visit we learned that as Creation proceeded, demonic imbalances, called

the Qlippoth, were spun off to the sides of the Tree of Life. Each Qlippah is an extreme and exaggerated form of a Sephirah. The latter are healthy chakra-like energy centers on the human body, and on Adam Kadmon. The evil of the Qlippoth is in their imbalance. These demons might have dissipated and been reabsorbed long ago, but the Trance has kept them in place. They've managed to cause mischief throughout history. But both these demons and the divine/angelic consciousness that could destroy them have remained mostly aloof from the human plane. However, with the Trance softening up in the early 20th century, and with the Apocalyptic era approaching, the Qlippoth began to descend into some vulnerable areas of Western civilization, capitalizing on social instabilities in Germany and Russia.

The Book of Revelation mentions a couple of mysterious and sinister figures – Gog and Magog. There are several accounts of the meaning of these terms, both of which are mentioned in the Old Testament. However, the various traditions are inconsistent; and it's reasonable to assume that the seer, John, borrowed this obscure religious symbolism to describe something in his vision that had a meaning of its own. But don't the names, themselves, sound like some masculine and feminine pair? The best candidates, in my opinion, are the Chokmah Qlippah and the Binah Qlippah. As imbalanced forms of masculine and feminine consciousness, these are the Prince and Princess of the demonic realms. Gog began his reign of glory in Germany, as Adolph Hitler led the Nazi Party forward from its quiet beginnings around 1920. It ended in 1945 as Hitler committed suicide, and as World War II ended in German defeat. Magog made her grand entrance in Russia with the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, and continued her reign until the end of the Soviet Union in 1991. True to Qabalistic theory, Gog's masculine reign was fast and furious, ending dramatically in the greatest military defeat in the Earth's history. Magog's reign, as a manifestation of Binah energy, lasted far longer. Entrenched in the economy of the Soviet empire, it gasped its last breath only when it had outlived its viability.

The role of a dragonslayer-Prince is entirely honorable. Cultures experience attacks on their lands, assets, sovereignty, and values from the jealous and less-enlightened. Sending barbaric hordes back home in defeat is a just and expected function of a warrior-Prince. Possessed by the Gog-demon, Hitler probably saw himself as just such a Prince. The Nazis' chief error in applying the principles of cultural protection was where to draw the line; and in that state of madness, they missed the mark halfway from here to the Moon. The meanness and brutality that had no military necessity speaks for itself. However, Hitler's choice of his primary target is equally evidence of demonic irrationality. Anglo-European, Greek, and Judaic cultures have been the rightful and factual bedrocks of Western civilization from ancient times to the present. The historical religious tradition of the West is solidly Judeo-Christian. The ancient Greeks gave us our enduring foundation in philosophy, medicine, and science. The most important parts of the West's metaphysical heritage are the products of the Greek Hermetists and the Jewish Qabalists. The Nazi assault on the Jews was like an environmentalist in an Escalade scratching the door of a Hummer! It was like an immune system attacking its own body. Not only was it wrong – it was utterly illogical. Perhaps with no barbaric hordes threatening Germany, the Gog-possessed Hitler simply needed a target to justify a Holocaust and a war, when neither was needed.

It's very probable that a majority of Germans supported or tolerated Nazism only out of fear. If German democracy had been in effect all along, the Holocaust never would have happened. A question, then, is just what *really* motivated the madness. Even if the Nazis grumbled about physical appearance, that was not what prompted the Holocaust. French and Irish appearance differ from that of the average German as much as does that of the average European Jew. Nor was the objection over salamis hanging from the ceilings of delicatessens. Germans enjoy their

Bier und Wurst as much as any culture on the planet. A hint of the root problem is that Jews fared rather poorly in the Soviet Union as well. So here's my take: Europeans and Greeks had long since become predominately Christian. And even with religious practice suppressed during the Soviet era, the root culture of Soviet Europeans was solidly Christian. The Jews were the only major ethnic group that had not joined the club. Qabalah contains some of the most powerful doctrine to identify the Qlippoth, and to destroy them by restoring balance to consciousness. Christianity had adopted Judaism's outward monotheistic tradition and religious history; but had ignored, or actively suppressed, metaphysical traditions such as Qabalah. Judaica was a greater threat to Gog, Magog, and their demonic colleagues than was Christianity, which had served them well during its darker episodes in history. The Nazis claimed – and consciously believed – that their concern was ethnic purity, and not religion. This shows just how very insidious that demons can be in motivating human consciousness, when their existence is threatened. In spiritual matters, deep and hidden causes often underlie deceptive surface appearances.

The nurturing role of the Princess also is honorable, just like the role of the warrior-Prince. Nations need to balance free enterprise with thoughtful social programs to help the troubled get back on their feet. It's also needful to regulate enterprise when business entities get big and powerful, and acquire too much clout. The Great American Recession of 2007–2009, and the job-market disaster that continued, show us clearly what happens when government fails to regulate big business. However, the Magog she-demon driving the Soviet empire was another classic case of taking good principles much too far. As with Gog, the error lay in where to draw the line. The leftist radicals in her grip protected the People from themselves for many miserable decades. Freedom of speech, religion, and enterprise were suppressed. Personal responsibility was a treasonous high crime, as it flew in the face of absolute collective responsibility.

Demons work primarily through people's egos, and often through their pocketbooks. Like computer viruses, they have a way of spreading – although not always in their original forms. They can morph to hide their signatures, and to increase their effectiveness in new hosts. As America and Europe fought World War II and the Cold War, the two prime demons of the Apocalypse pulled off a stealthy, wholesale invasion of Western culture. They did so by transforming themselves into their Hermetic opposites, and by spoofing their way through the West's firewalls by appealing to people's egos. Gog 2.0 flattered Western minds over their sound defeat of the Nazis. Since Hitler's program of cultural protection was evil, the ultimate good is obviously all-inclusiveness. Stark liberalism mandates that all interests are equally legitimate, and that no one be discriminated against. Well – *almost* no one. Conservatives who advocate any values that stand against all-inclusiveness obviously *must* be discriminated against. But what if differing ethnicities and subcultures harbor different opinions on national policy? That should be easy: We were taught since elementary school that democracy is the Western way to bring balance, and to determine the most equitable solutions. Gog 2.0 changed that formula. Since it was white Europeans in Germany that persecuted the Jews, therefore all whites – *including* Jews – must go to the end of the queue and propitiate. Never mind that it was primarily the whites of many countries who gave up their lives and limbs to defeat the Nazis. Democracy cannot be permitted to stand against the liberal ethic. California has a large Hispanic population. In 1994, California's voters passed a ballot initiative to prevent illegal immigrants from receiving many of the state's social services at taxpayer expense. It could not possibly have passed without substantial Hispanic support. But the liberal federal judiciary – a fraternal cult that builds temples to Gog 2.0 – would have none of it, so democracy was squelched. Liberals have tried to

address this problem by redefining "democracy" as all-inclusiveness, rather than as majority rule. Since that camp loves to pass along the demons in its consciousness to young minds, these revisionist linguistics are undoubtedly what is being taught to our children in many public schools. And then there's anti-Semitism. Hitler popularized the term. *That* anti-Semitism was wrong! America and the West have long considered Israel a major ally. But the Gog 2.0-possessed liberals have realized that Jews are whiter and more Western than many other cultures of the Middle East. It therefore should be no surprise that Western sentiment against the Jewish state comes primarily from the liberal camp.

Magog 2.0 has played her havoc in the West as well. Since Soviet communism was a great economic evil, the greatest economic good must be the kind of unfettered free enterprise that we call "capitalism." To regulate free enterprise is just patently un-American. That may be true when applied to small businesses. But when applied to the big ones, it has created several very unhealthy developments for the West. First, as noted earlier, the 2007–2009 recession was produced directly by a failure to regulate. Second, virtual monopolies have degraded the quality of available products and services, and have made it difficult for smaller businesses to compete. Third, the ethos of large, publicly traded business causes it to value international trading partners, and all economic opportunities, over national culture. Fourth, since candidates from both major political parties, and many independent politicians, are supported and elected by big business, representative democracy in America – which long served the nation so well – is now a sham and a joke. We have a cosmetic democracy in place, but just under its surface lies a powerful and insidious plutocracy – the rule of the rich.

Gog 2.0 is the driving force behind the "Progressive" wing of the Democratic Party. Magog 2.0 drives the economic conservatives, who often ally with religious fundamentalists as right-wing Republicans. The two parties may seem to be in competition, but they do not result in political balance in America. The Libertarian Party tries to achieve "balance" by embracing both imbalances at once – call it the Infernal Marriage! Both the social liberals and the economic conservatives have globalist agendas that utterly disregard national culture. They quibble over details. But the two demons agree on their prime single objective: the utter destruction of essential American and Western culture, and the prevention of its Apocalyptic Awakening and destiny. The demons don't want to die. They want to rule forever! Many religious conservatives adhere to traditional values that, historically, have given the West much of its cultural greatness. However, their own brand of imbalance and absolutism makes it difficult to elect moderates who might invigorate the center of the political spectrum. Figure 13-1 shows how balanced forces are attempting to bring America to the Center, while the demonic forces are trying to rip the nation apart at its seams.

< figure 13-1 about here, on full page >

The juvenile Prince and Princess got off to a bad start in the '60s. Puberty is the natural call to spiritual awakening, but also is a time when many things can go wrong. Their demonic counterparts mesmerized them with alternatives to their rightful awakening. Magog 2.0, with the lure of capitalism, endless technology, and big money, seduced the scientific mind of the Boomer Prince. Masculine consciousness, historically, has fared better in the Trance than has the feminine. With lavish promises of material prosperity to challenge his intellect, the Prince felt less motivation to be a spiritual pioneer. The religious institutions of his parents provided good social networks with other prosperity seekers. So why rock the boat? Let the good times roll! The Boomer Princess felt the call to awaken; and in her case it became urgent, or even an obsession. With the Dragon's spiritual anesthesia beginning to wear off, she reached a point of

critical mass. She was aware enough to sense that she had somehow been used, but not yet aware enough to take personal responsibility for having let it happen. She noticed the Prince, but his half-groggy overtures were not what she had in mind. They were probably something on the order of, "You're supposed to be in subjection to me. Well . . . at least that's what I was taught!" (See Ephesians 5:22.) Gog 2.0 came to her rescue. He told her, "I'm the one you seek. Together, we can destroy everything that ever has taken advantage of you." In the grand tantrum of all time, the Princess rebelled; and a huge chunk of Western culture plunged headlong over the deep end.

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Urinating on the ground in front of others was the norm at the Woodstock music festival of 1969 in New York State. Hundreds of thousands showed up and crashed the gates. Pot and LSD were the sacraments, as the loud music blared. The festival was the symbolic focal point of a new counter culture. Bad was good, and good was old-guard repression. The Princess and her followers had come into their own. The Western values of her parents were to be trampled underfoot forever. After all, she was awakening to establish a new spiritual order, wasn't she? Everything Third World was *sooo* much more spiritual than anything Western! And psychedelic drugs were the ultimate spiritual experience.

Thus has a highly polarized American culture evolved since the '60s. There has been some slow centering. Numerous DVDs are being produced in which professional scientists are embracing holistic studies of consciousness and spirit. Many of the old hippies are working in health supermarkets, assisting customers seeking the right vitamins and herbal supplements. But the major political parties are as polarized as ever. In the 1990s one of America's particularly free, balanced, and sane minds ran twice for the presidency. I'm referring, of course, to billionaire Ross Perot. The second time, it was as the nominee of the Reform Party, which he founded. The Reform Party was centrist and populist, and briefly made a better political incursion than had any other third party in recent history. It championed various aspects of governmental reform. But the most conspicuous parts of its platform were squelching international free trade agreements, and bringing American jobs back home to Americans. The efforts fizzled, mainly for two reasons. First, voters have a legitimate fear of wasting their votes by supporting a third-party candidate – an issue to be dealt with in a later chapter. Second, Reform didn't have a really comprehensive social agenda. That, in turn, is because it's difficult for a party to construct a populist platform on hundreds of social issues and all of their nuances. Extremist parties don't have that problem. On things like abortion, they're either "for it" or "against it." A centrist party would feel that it has to take some position on waiting periods, parental notification, and the like. And who knows exactly where the public really stands on all those details?

One thing is obvious: The public's representatives in Washington haven't been asking. Have you noticed that there are no ballot initiatives in Washington? If citizens of any state try to rock the boat with a ballot initiative, the federal judiciary will fix that quickly. Since it's an attempt to change the status quo established by the plutocracy, it's therefore unconstitutional – even if the Constitution doesn't really say so. The Constitution, of course, is the official Will of the American People. The citizens of the offending state are just being rogues, and must be put squarely back in their places! On the other hand, if Americans could vote on issues at the national level, that would be politically difficult for the plutocracy to squelch. And the plutocrats can have none of that.

Not, at least, until the citizens that elect them demand otherwise. The best way for infinite

and immortal beings to take their streets back is through a constitutional amendment that implements Direct Democracy at the national level. That means, in principle, that the public would have the opportunity to vote directly on any important issue. The implementing amendment would have to be passed through the usual legislative processes, or through a Constitutional Convention. There are perils in Direct Democracy, which is more complex than you might think. The full proposal is in a later chapter; but for now, here's the short form: If five US Senators or twenty US Representatives (about five percent of either House) propose an issue vote, it goes to the voters. Each lawmaker would be limited to one vote proposal every four years. Should the voters pass the issue, it becomes a part of the US Constitution. In other words, this is a new mechanism for passing constitutional amendments. If it were not, it would be almost worthless. If it carried only the weight of federal legislation, the courts could declare the votes unconstitutional.

Some may question the wisdom and necessity of opening the Constitution to such wholesale changes. Can't the politicians fix the problems with a few amendments on important issues? They could have long ago, but a majority of them won't. All of them claim to be representing their constituents. This is their opportunity to prove it. If they already support the public will, they should have no fear of direct public votes. It's worth noting that if the Reform Party had combined the bringing home of jobs with a Direct Democracy platform, they would have eliminated the mentioned problems with a social agenda. Leave the details to the People!

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Before the full-blown proposal is presented, the next few chapters will examine several high-profile political issues. That's partly for entertainment, since they're fun to look at from a spiritual perspective. Maybe we can uncover more of those elusive American values! You'll get a peek at a few of my own political leanings. But my specific opinions are not the main point. The exploration of these issues will show how Direct Democracy can be applied, and how important it is to the nation's future that the People have the final say.

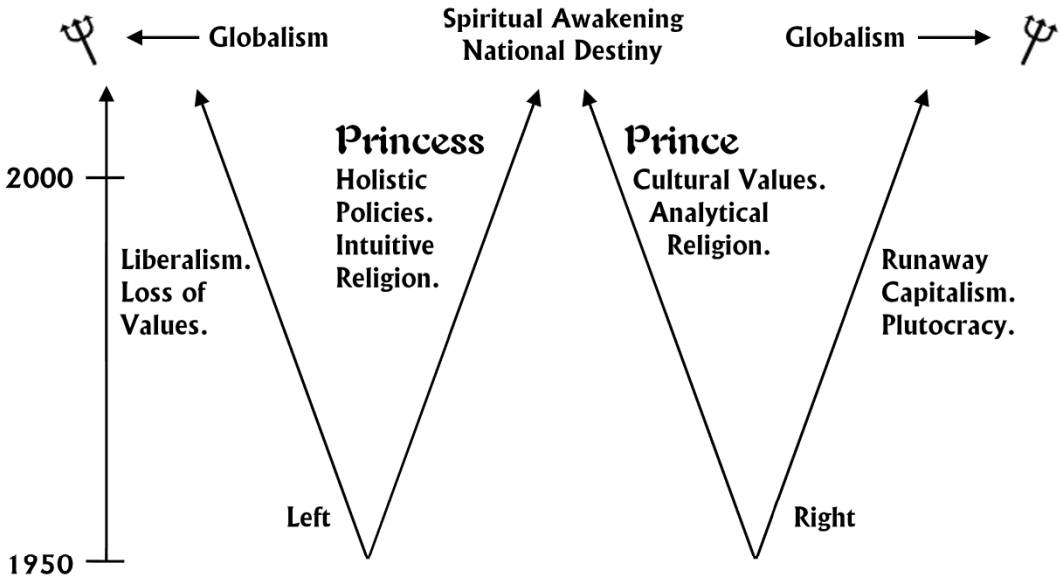

Figure 13-1: America's Political Crisis

Chapter 14

Corporate Inc. – Attack of the Giant Androids

Twentieth century writers produced hundreds of science fiction books and movies loosely bound by a common theme: machines attack humans. Those machines may be computers built by the humans to serve them, but which eventually develop life of their own, and decide to take charge. The machines may be robots – including human-like androids – or even modified humans who are part machine. In all cases the machines were built by intelligent, organic life. But eventually they got out of control and turned on their creators. Even though artificial, the machines came to behave as "persons" in their own right. This won't ever happen in real life? Think again. A version of it has been happening on planet Earth for at least a few centuries.

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A common definition of a corporation is an "artificial person" in the view of business law. The convention was created to make it easier to tax and regulate businesses that are not owned by an individual or a simple partnership. They are governed by boards of directors, who outrank even their CEOs and presidents. The board members, themselves, are elected by the company's shareholders – the "owners" of a corporation. All corporations, of course, are the creations of a society of humans – spiritual beings like ourselves who possess and operate human bodies. The term "corporation" relates to Latin *corpus*, which means "body." These business entities, then, are giant bodies through which collections of spiritual beings carry out their interests with the environment. Like all bodies, corporations are mortal, even though they often outlive human bodies many times over. Unlike what is typical for a human incarnation, these artificial persons are operated by an ever-changing collection of humans who invest in them, work for them, or manage them.

If an infinite and immortal being such as you or I were to walk into a conference room full of artificial persons, you'd think that these androids, who owe their very existence to us humans, all would rise and stand out of respect until the immortal was seated. But experience shows another reality. In practice, humans are cogs in the corporate machines – or cells in the company's body. The luckiest ones retire with a gold watch and a pension. Far more are dismissed when the company decides to cut its payroll. Quite often they are marched to the door without even the opportunity to say "bye" to their fellow employees – even when there are no accusations of wrongdoing. Of course, some of these practices might be tolerated as "business necessities." However, public perceptions of corporate coldness, and of indifference to the welfare of employees, usually are in proportion to the size of the company in question. This is not simply because big companies generate more news. It also is because giant corporations operate with an entirely different culture and set of priorities than do small to medium-sized businesses.

Small businesses usually are privately owned and operated. The owners are hands-on managers who must have some personal competence to have been able to start a successful business. For a small business to survive, its products must be of fairly good quality. Personal pride usually prompts small business owners to succeed by providing high-quality goods and services, rather than by reducing quality to minimize expenses. Layoffs of adequately performing employees are rare.

Privately owned restaurants often are good examples of small-business quality. Some are the

elite bistros that provide excellent, if pricy, gourmet cuisine. Then there are the little diners that serve great breakfasts and lunches at very modest prices. But the large, corporate chains, with a few rare exceptions, are exercises in mediocrity – serving so-so food at not-so-modest prices. Unlike at the private venues, service often is robotic: "I'm Jack, and I'll be your server tonight. May I start you off with some fried cheese or artichoke dip?"

One reason for the different culture of large businesses is the matter of who they have to pay, and the profits required to do the paying. Big companies must pay their executives, who routinely receive many times the pay of small business owners. But they also must earn considerable profits for their shareholders – the "owners" of the business who have invested funds, but who never have lifted a finger to produce any of the products or services. When the economy fluctuates, small business owners may tolerate an unprofitable season, expecting to bounce back in the next year. Shareholders expect profits under all circumstances, and corporate executives are expected to provide it. Under tight times employees are laid off, even though the company will need to hire more in the near future. Often it's not that the corporation couldn't continue to pay these good employees; but rather that if they did so, they would not show enough net profit – and heads in high places would roll as a result. Competition between corporate giants, for both profit and market share, is very fierce, and invariably has priority over retaining employees. Small business owners must be competent in the products and services they provide. But the highly compensated corporate executives require competence of a very different kind – playing the big power games in which these giant artificial persons compete with each other. Once rising to these high ranks, the corporate execs are in a special, self-protective culture all to themselves. They often have medical insurance plans, while employed and after retirement, that exceed those of ordinary employees and retirees. And when they are hired they can't lose, as they are paid millions in salaries if they succeed, and millions in severance if they fail. Ironically, if the executives make the company profitable by laying off some employees and cutting the pay and hours of others, they often are given large bonuses as a reward for the profitability.

"Hostile takeovers" are corporate realities that are nonexistent in the small business world. A small business owner may sell his or her business to another company, but only voluntarily. If the small business is profitable, a sale or merger usually would occur with the expectation that product quality will be maintained, and that the combined business will accomplish even greater things. In contrast, one corporation often can buy out another against the will of the smaller company's top management. They do this by making an offer to the smaller company's shareholders, which may cause their stock to increase substantially in value after the acquisition. The shareholders can force the sale through their representatives on the board of directors. Such sales often have little to do with increasing or maintaining product quality, even if such claims of good intent are expressed publicly. Shareholder profit is invariably the deciding factor. Some states even have laws mandating that if a company is being pursued by multiple suitors, the offer that provides the most immediate profit to shareholders must prevail. Such laws, of course, were passed by legislators in the pay of corporate donors who helped elect them. The typical aftermath of such acquisitions is familiar. Staff is downsized. Any exceptional product quality is reduced toward mediocrity. The executives who stay aboard receive large bonuses, and those who leave often get severance pay that make a regular employee's annual wages look like a waitress's tip.

As an example, I used to shop at one of the better department store chains in my area. This small chain had several stores in the general region. Its buyers often found exceptionally good products from area manufacturers, in addition to those from larger national and international sources. I frequently bought some exceptionally well made wash-and-wear pants produced by an

area manufacturer, the specific style apparently being made for this department store chain under contract. Then came the buyout. A larger national department store chain bought out the local one. Regional merchandise was dropped. The larger chain wanted to carry only the merchandise that it could carry uniformly in all its stores around the nation. Overall quality cratered – and so much for the great pants! I now buy from other sources, but have yet to find as good a replacement. It is notable that such corporate changes not only inconvenience customers, but often hurt small to medium-sized manufacturers, as well, who can't yet compete nationally.

There is a theory that markets are customer-driven, as all of us consumers choose where to shop and what to buy. In practice, markets are driven by shareholder profits alone. Consumers do have choices. We can shop at any of the remaining behemoths we choose, and buy what we perceive to be the least of the evils. There are those who like to tout the vast superiority of capitalism over communist systems. I positively agree that capitalism is superior, but the breed practiced in the Western world doesn't deserve all the accolades it gets. In the old Soviet system, consumers might get to choose between state-provided garments A, B, or C – all of minimal quality. But in the West, we often shop at several of the big chains to find merchandise that meets our needs. It is frustrating to go from one store to another, only to discover that mediocre national brands A, B, and C are all that is offered at any of them. The upside is that Western goods usually are superior to communist goods. The big downsides are that exceptional-quality products, and the number of product choices, tend to disappear as rapidly as they show up. Even when many customers choose a top-notch product that is sold at a reasonable price, and at a fair profit to the manufacturer and retailer, that very-popular product – such as the pants cited above – may still disappear from the market. Shareholder profit and executive bonuses don't disappear with them.

America's lawmakers have long been aware of the dangers of monopolies – single businesses dominating a market while providing mediocre products and services, often at inflated prices. Anti-trust laws, in theory, are supposed to address this. In practice, these laws are almost a joke. In general, if there are at least three independent providers of a product or service in this entire colossal nation, the courts will allow acquisitions and mergers to proceed. The justification is that competition among the two or three remaining behemoths will hold prices down, and will prompt each company to meet the needs of its customers. In practice, the choices offered customers may come down to the styles of faceplates available on cell phones provided by different companies. Some smaller companies may wish to find a larger suitor to buy them out. Such consolidations may serve legitimate needs, up to the level of mid-sized corporations that are large enough to compete nationally. Yet, this is perhaps where the mergers should stop. Complaints of product shortcomings and impersonal customer service are most common with corporate giants. This raises the question as to whether there is such a thing as a company's being too large for the national good, regardless of the presence of a few competitors. Mid-sized company A may say that it needs to merge with company B because it cannot compete against corporate giant C; and so regulators often allow such mergers, even when they will reduce competition. It almost never occurs to them that a better solution is to break company C into pieces, each producing a different part of the original C product line. This does happen rarely, if company C has become a monopoly. But after years of court fights, the giant usually agrees to spin off a service or two, so as to make it the closest possible thing to a monopoly without being a blatant one. Politicians have a distaste for offending corporate giants. But why shouldn't they? It's money from these giants that elects most of them!

The difference between the good in American and Western enterprise and its bad and ugly

side may be the difference between free enterprise and capitalism. True communist nations have no free enterprise. All businesses are state-owned. The Western system, in contrast, allows anyone and their dog to start a business, as long as they pay taxes and don't deceive their customers. The problems of capitalism tend to arise when a company "goes public" and sells stock. This is where the entire work ethic shifts. Product pride often gets transmuted into the level of product quality – or lack of it – that will maximize profits for the shareholders. When a private business needs cash, a healthier practice might be to borrow investment capital or sell bonds, to be paid off as term loans. Another option is to merge with another privately owned company. These options leave the expanded business in private hands, preserving as much of the free-enterprise work ethic as possible.

A more disturbing issue is the tendency of runaway capitalism to do serious damage to democracy. Corporate influence in political elections is well known. Those so-elected act to perpetuate the system, often without regard to the will of the constituents they are supposed to represent. Fair treatment by the courts is a cornerstone of democracy. Once upon a time, more of the nation's courts were run in a simpler manner – a bit like the "small claims" courts of today. But the legal battles among corporate giants and the government are like battles between the gods, with thunder rolling. The court system has evolved to accommodate the needs of the corporate artificial persons. Even a lawsuit between individuals is complex and very costly. But it can be exceedingly difficult to litigate against a corporate titan. Whether they are a plaintiff or a defendant, smaller litigants often tend to settle for less than justice, or accept outright defeat, simply because they don't have the funds to continue the war. The results of all these developments is "plutocracy" – rule by big money. Plutocracy can even trump free speech. Large organizations have gotten laws passed to suppress even the most sincere criticism of their products, as if criticism is slander. Numerous Internet sites have been created to compare and rate the products of different companies. Many have been sued, or intimidated into withdrawing criticism, as the affected corporations complain that they "may lose money."

International corporations, and foreign ownership of the stocks of domestic ones, expand the problems exponentially. The ruling plutocracy is expanded to include not only foreign countries, but foreign cultures that clash with the American way of life – so hard-won in our nation's first two centuries. Yet, they expect to be treated as equals in the American court system. That is, equal with the American corporate giants, and "equally unequal" with consumers and small businesses.

So-called "free trade" is the sledgehammer designed to break the backs of the economies of developed nations, while purporting to do just the opposite. Proponents of free trade say that it benefits consumers, who will have the option to buy less-expensive imports instead of paying higher prices for domestic goods. This view is extremely short-sighted for numerous reasons. By using what would be considered slave labor in America, many Third World countries can produce and export products at low costs that are impossible for American producers to match. Proponents say these are just a choice, and that consumers can opt to buy American. But when reality hits, there always is a sizeable stratum of Americans, at the lower end of the economic scale, who feel forced to buy the cheapest products they can find, often without regard to quality. When this stratum of consumers quits buying American products, this reduces the sales volumes of domestic producers. This, in turn, can increase manufacturing costs per item, which drives up wholesale prices. Retailers are caught in the middle. If they carry only American products, they'll lose business. And if they carry any domestic products at all, they often have to accept a smaller profit margin; because if they were to raise the retail price to match wholesale price

increases, even less of these products would sell. It does not matter that there is a solid block of consumers who would rather pay more for American goods, which often are of higher quality. Many retailers choose to carry mostly imports, knowing well the reality that most consumers do not have the time or leisure to shop all over town for the perfect item, and will settle for something less satisfying so as to get on with other affairs. But since retailers are very competitive, any who try to put quality or patriotism over profit margins likely will be forced out of business.

In practice – and without any negative considerations of ethnicity being involved – there is an enormous difference today between the import of goods from European markets and import of similar goods from Third World nations. European countries have labor and wage standards close to those of America. Their production costs are similar. But in keeping with long tradition and cultural pride, their standards of quality often meet or exceed American standards. When import costs are added, European items often retail at higher prices in America than do domestically produced items. When they can be found, usually in high-end stores, consumers will pay a premium for them because of the superior quality. Just a few of these items that come to mind are French linens, English pajamas, Irish crystal, Scottish shortbread, Italian shirts and vases, and fine Polish art glass pieces. These items compete with similar goods produced in America, but do little damage to the domestic market due to their high prices. If anything, they may encourage American manufacturers to maintain better quality. Just as these European items often are considered "special," some imports from Third World countries enjoy a similar distinction. While being something of an Anglophile, I nevertheless enjoy some diversity in my home décor. A couple of examples are a beautiful rosewood alter table from Beijing and a bone marquetry vase from India. Such items that reflect the unique, traditional culture of any country – whether European or Third World – have a minimal impact on the American market, because they really are specialty items. However, this is not the case with most Third World imports that differ from American goods only in cost and quality.

The next time you shop for a ceramic lamp or vase, read the tags on the bottom. At most stores you'll do well to find even one made in the United States, the vast majority being Third World imports. Of course, an item that depicted Asian art would be considered a specialty. The problem is that even items of traditional Anglo-European design are made mostly in Asia. Some would shrug this off as a blessing, presuming they are getting bargains, because the occasional domestically produced items cost somewhat more. This is highly naïve. American importers love to sell cheap imports at as high a price as the market will bear, and pocket the increased profits. The prices of domestic items are boosted, due to lower sales volume. Such arrangements actually provide no benefit whatsoever to American consumers, while causing a raft of less-visible problems. In recent years, the news has been full of reports of toxic metals and materials found in various Asian imports, including infant formula, toys, and jewelry. I've found that, on average, buttons come loose on the Asian-made shirts that I've purchased much sooner than on ones made in America or Europe; and the dyes more often fade or bleed. For many years I bought a traditional style of men's house shoes made by an American manufacturer with roots and reputation going back decades. They looked good and fit perfectly. Some years ago the company began having them made in China. They even kept the exact same style number on their boxes – but they were not the same shoe! The heels were shaped differently, because they now had a rear seam where none had existed on the domestic product. The result was that they consistently slipped off the heel, and behaved like flip-flops. Did they come at a discount? Dream on! I switched to an Italian import that was not easy to find. The loss of market for

American manufacturers greatly reduces American employment, as well American artistic creativity, innovation, and pride in craftsmanship. A portion of the American dollars paid for imported merchandise leaves the US economy for Third World countries. This amounts to a sizeable fraction of America's productivity that is not being used to better the lives of its citizens. If our exports matched the imports, this might seem less of a problem. In practice, America has run a serious trade deficit for many decades, and our politicians are mostly oblivious to it.

When I brought up these issues in a social group, one gentleman responded that free trade helps to get money to those who need it the most. How naïve can compassion be? America had become an economic powerhouse by 1950, due primarily to two factors. One was its population by highly educated European immigrants with a very high standard of living. The other was relative physical and economic isolation that made the nation as self-sufficient as possible. The result was so spectacular that many people of every country in the world have long lusted for life in America. Globalization is the demon that started the nation's downfall. When Ross Perot ran for President, part of the Reform Party's platform was to limit free trade and bring home jobs. Perot warned of a "giant sucking sound" if free trade evolved as planned. History proved him absolutely right. He was the wise "fool on the hill." In this case, many citizens listened. But Reform did not have the clout or mechanisms to out-maneuver the two major parties, both of which are beholden to the artificial persons. A nation's economy is its lifeblood. Transfuse enough of that lifeblood into the "developing" Third World nations, and American standards will plummet into equilibrium with the Third World. Some may maintain that our "cup runneth over," and the least we can do is share some of our prosperity with less-developed sectors. But the Great Recession of 2007 and the depressed job market that followed showed that this argument does not hold water. The recession, *per se*, was over by mid-2009, as the stocks of the artificial persons showed they again were profitable – in no small part due to radical cuts in their workforces. Job market recoveries always lag recession recoveries, but rarely ever by this much. The years afterward left Americans looking for the jobs that no longer were there – while the economies of China and many other Third World nations began outperforming America and the West! At this writing, China is still on the international list of "developing" nations – which gets it more slack on many trade and labor issues – and its leaders will throw ugly tantrums at any suggestion of removing their nation from this list. So buying imports gets money to those who need it the most? It seems that the corporate giants do not need as many of us humans anymore, and many of the job positions they still need have been filled by virtual slave labor abroad. Baby Boomers were expected to enjoy higher living standards than their parents, and to pass the improvements on to their children. By Boomer retirement, much of that bubble had burst. Our forebears worked hard and nobly to make America an even better place for their posterity. No argument under the Sun can defend rampant globalism as being other than unmitigated evil – as it's undoing everything our countrymen have long worked for. But rest assured that this plight did not just "happen" to us. America's leadership has shamelessly sold out our hard-earned heritage, while we citizens were just too asleep to notice. A "Trance" perchance?

Globalism has a cultural component, as well as an economic one; and it can be either good or bad. It's fine for much technology and science developed in one nation to benefit others. But a serious problem comes about when venerable cultures lose their character. I mentioned earlier that exported jobs can hurt American artistic creativity and pride in craftsmanship. It can do the same to the citizens of the nations who fill these exported jobs. In relative economic isolation, virtually every culture on Earth developed its own fine sophistication in the arts and craftsmanship. A prime example is China, whose people – prior to communist times – were

among the more sophisticated on the planet. Then why are so many of the Asian imports sold in America of quality ranging from mediocre to abominable? To find the answer, imagine for a moment that history had played out differently, putting the shoe on the other foot. Envision a Europe and America that had evolved their traditions in décor and the arts, but that had been less fortunate in economics and scientific innovation. Then envision a China with its beautiful tradition of arts and crafts, but which had become an economic and scientific powerhouse by 1950. It is conceivable that many Europeans and Americans, wanting to pay for Eastern innovations such as dishwashers, computers, and cell phones, would be producing Asian-style furniture and accessories for export to Asia. But slaves, when robbed of their own culture, quickly lose the impulses of their ancestors toward artistic creativity and pride in craftsmanship. Cultural and economic globalism of this kind denies the citizens of all affected countries some of the best aspects of their own cultures, and replaces them with muck. In metaphor – place the finest burgers, egg rolls, sushi, and hummus in a blender and flip the switch. Soon, nothing will be left that most people would feed to their dogs! The only ones that benefit, in passing, from unfettered globalism are big corporations, importers and exporters, and those humans in their upper ranks. With the only ethic being corporate profit, the most successful people in the world, at the time of this writing, are those who are more than happy to sell out their countries and their cultures, piece by piece, to the highest bidders. But these corporate execs – riding the crests of the waves – are committing cultural suicide. Like other humans, they will have children and grandchildren. And if you share my belief in reincarnation, they can expect to come back, eventually, to experience first-hand the results of their handiwork. I shudder about their karma! The few who think that rampant globalism is a good thing are junkies who are addicted to this socio-economic drug, and living only for the moment.

There are other things besides free trade of goods that the giant artificial persons do to maximize their profits at the expense of consumers and smaller businesses. One is the export of service jobs. In particular, consumer credit companies have taken to relocating their call centers to India and elsewhere, to take advantage of the cheap labor available. Of course, this means providing that many less jobs for American citizens. It also is quite telling that many business organizations politically oppose moves to restrict immigration, including the illegal variety and the hiring of illegals. Another way to eliminate jobs is through excessive mechanization. Some large retailers and grocers now offer self-service checkout lines, at which the customers scan and sack their merchandise, and then pay with a credit card. Especially at slower hours, only one or two human cashiers may be available, despite customers waiting. By reducing their overhead, this gives these large retailers a competitive advantage over smaller retailers for whom self-service checkouts would be impractical. The giants may defend this practice, claiming that many customers apparently prefer them. It takes only a little thought to realize that many will use them rather than wait in a longer checkout line. It also does not take a rocket scientist to realize that it would be relatively easy, at a self-serve station, to avoid scanning one or more items, even while going through the motions. It's bound to happen. But the artificial persons have a pact with such thieves. Be reasonably coy about the pilferage and we'll look the other way, since you're actually saving us money! It's simple arithmetic. Occasional petty theft costs less than the wages and benefits of a cashier. Large artificial persons live with different priorities and ethical sensitivities than do humans. The bottom line of their ledger sheet is all that matters.

In fairness, big corporations and governments – the "artificial persons" – are not inherently evil. They supposedly are here to serve their human creators, and they can do so if properly regulated. The entire problem is that they are regulating themselves. Politicians lack the spine to

restrict them. Without strong populist regulations to control the corporate giants, one after another will feel the pinch of economics, and then drop traditional pride in favor of the easy ways out. But because the giants are very competitive, whenever one leaves the straight and narrow path, all the others are forced to do so as well. Only strong nationalist regulations will raise the playing field, uniformly, for all concerned. Representative democracy has become a sham. Regardless of the party from which the President and Congress are elected, most of our so-called "public servants" serve the artificial persons first; and the citizens second, if at all. Direct Democracy is a mechanism to provide more leverage to the public. With regard to the corporate world, these are some of the possible changes that might be enacted by the People:

- Enact thoughtful measures to discourage major layoffs by large companies. Mandatory severance pay is a possibility. Place caps on executive bonuses and other compensation for at least three years after a company has laid off a significant percentage of its workforce. Limits to payouts to shareholders might be in order as well.
- Ban special medical insurance plans, for public corporation executives, that don't also apply to their full-time employees and retirees.
- Repeal any state and federal laws requiring hostile takeovers to be honored solely on the basis of maximizing shareholder profits.
- Require national yes/no ballot items for voter approval of mergers and acquisitions involving larger corporations.
- Mandate that department stores and similar retailers obtain a certain percentage of their merchandise from local or regional suppliers, where feasible, as well as limiting the percentage of foreign imports.
- Enact thoughtful measures to encourage private company ownership, and the use of loans and bonds for venture capital, with proportionate reduction in the public trading of corporate shares.
- Ban loans and investment capital to and from many foreign sources, and consider restricting foreign purchases of domestic stocks and bonds.
- Force the United States to pull out of all so-called "free trade" agreements that the public considers harmful. This actually can bolster the success of American manufacturers.
- Allow the public to vote on which specific countries can sell America various categories of merchandise, and mandate percentages that must be made by American-owned companies.
- Restrict which countries can buy the rights to an American brand name or product line, with an eye to maintaining quality.
- Bring the customer service call centers of American companies back to America, and place other thoughtful restrictions on foreign outsourcing.
- Eliminate most self-checkout lines.
- Mandate that ethnic art and accessory imports be made in their native countries. I shudder when I look on the bottom of a vase or statue reflecting Indian, Egyptian, or African culture – let alone European – only to find that it was made in east Asia. Also, require the country of origin to be engraved on the bottom of most such items, to discourage fraud.

When Direct Democracy becomes reality, these ideas should be debated at length, and enacted thoughtfully, rather than carelessly. But they provide some idea of what the American voters can do to recover their money, careers, and culture for themselves and their posterity.

Chapter 15

From Theocracy to Democracy

The United States Constitution has long enshrined the doctrine of Separation of Church and State as a bedrock American value. Unfortunately, it seems that for 21st-century America, this constitutional provision has raised far more legal questions than it has answered. The time and money spent in litigating the same issues over and over is a travesty. Public schools can adopt a policy on a religion-sensitive issue, and be sued over it by irate parents or a special interest group. They can adopt the opposite policy – or any position in between – and still be sued. The issue can be as simple as whether a child should be allowed to hand out candy canes to fellow students. Permit it, and some will say that the school is allowing the promotion of a religious holiday. Prohibit it, and the parents may claim that their child's free speech rights are being violated. Heaven forbid that a student-body president might wish to offer a prayer while making a speech at a graduation ceremony. Both sides of that issue are ready to pounce with litigation. The only winners in such public brawls are the attorneys on both sides, who eagerly fan the flames by encouraging their clients.

All the gyrating litigation is not getting clear and comprehensive answers from the courts. Congress could enact laws to clarify the issues, but the same plaintiffs would sue to have the laws declared unconstitutional. It seems that constitutional verbiage that had a clear meaning to the last several generations is clear as mud to the current American populace. Even different Supreme Court justices can read the same Constitution and draw opposing conclusions. From all this, it should be evident that constitutional amendments are the only way to resolve these issues. Yet, I shudder at the politicians trying to hammer out constitutional amendments. They can debate such things for decades without passing a congressional resolution, let alone getting it ratified by state legislatures. And if they did, there is no guarantee that it would reflect the will of the voting majority. But before speculating about how the People might resolve these issues, it will be prudent to take a look at the historical roots of the church-state doctrine.

All school kids learn about the Puritans and the Pilgrims. Aside from their quest for new land and adventure, we are told that these groups colonized North America to have the freedom and privacy to practice their own breeds of Christianity. The Spanish Inquisition was history, and the Roman Catholic Church no longer was the official religion of England. However, the Anglican Church had replaced it; and both England and Europe could be less than tolerant of non-conformist sects. America had plenty of land and room for diverse communities to carry on their lifestyles while staying out of each other's hair. The Founders shared a strong inclination for tolerance, driven in part by Masonic ideals, that was behind the original decision to form a democracy. In 1791 the Bill of Rights was passed, containing the first ten constitutional amendments. The First Amendment includes the clause, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Until the 20th century, this provision seemed clear and unambiguous. There was no state church or state religion. And virtually any sect could build a house of worship and do its own thing.

Schools were community-based, autonomous, and not generally viewed as arms of the government. If the school leadership wanted to stage a Christmas pageant, all the kids and teachers had fun. So what, if an occasional student was a Jew or an American Indian? Exposure

to the prevailing culture in a community was considered a routine aspect of life. But prior to the 1960s there was another prevalent aspect of American culture that promoted tolerance. I'd call it "delegated authority." In the case of schools, this meant that parents respected the rights of principals and teachers to set the agenda and keep order. If there was concern about some issue, parents could take it up with a superintendent or school board. But apart from the election of new school board members if there was widespread dissatisfaction, these leaders were expected to assert their authority and get on with the business of education. If the kids were graduating with proficiency in the three Rs, then the schools must be doing their jobs.

Whatever might be said in favor of the civil rights movement of the 1960s, it ushered in a new set of problems that have left the country reeling ever since. Public schools came under more scrutiny due to integration issues, and the fact that they were funded by the government became much more important as constitutional concerns were raised. While civil rights issues were supposed to promote tolerance in certain regards, their application in that era and ever since have killed tolerance in countless other ways. First and foremost, the venerable American respect for "delegated authority" was dragged into a dark alley and had a stake driven through its heart. Racial issues drove the civil rights movement and prompted a new breed of litigation. However, lawyers everywhere smelled a whole new orchard full of fruit that was ripe for the picking. The Constitution is a set of general principles that are at their best when applied to sweeping social issues, and in setting overall direction. The Bill of Rights, in particular, was meant to tie the hands of the government in dealing with the lives of citizens. But lawyers and judges alike began to use the Constitution for something for which it never was designed. Like carnival psychics with crystal balls and Ouija boards, they began to see the invisible writing of which even the Constitution's framers were surely unaware. It seems that the Constitution contains the specifics to micro-manage the movements of everyone in American society, if any other party objects to their actions or decisions. What complicates this issue is that the psychic abilities of different judges can produce contradictory readings. But the public schools are one of the main venues in which this farce has played out.

A hot-button issue is over any use of prayer by school officials or students, even at events such as graduation ceremonies. Never mind that the majority of citizens in most communities are religious or spiritual. Never mind the fact that most communities include diverse sects and faiths, or that prayer is an almost universal feature of traditional Western religions. Never mind the fact that the usual intent of an invocation is to invite the blessing of whatever Power May Be on the lives and fortunes of these diverse graduating students. Certain atheist families will sue on the grounds that their graduating children might be "irreparably harmed" by "forced" exposure to this religious practice, which they also maintain has no place in any organization receiving government funding. When schools have tried to ban prayer, to avoid litigation, religious parents have fought back, saying that the schools are denying their students the very freedoms of speech and religion that are guaranteed in the Bill of Rights. Somewhat like the biblical King Solomon, but with far less wisdom, the courts have tried to settle the dispute – not by *offering* to cut the baby in half, but by *insisting* on doing it. As their cleavers fell, different courts have divided the spoils in many creative ways. Some have said that a school employee cannot offer a graduation prayer, but that a student can. Others have mandated no use of prayer, nor even a time of silence; but have permitted student speakers to offer good wishes and blessings represented as their own thoughts. However, there is nothing whatsoever in the First Amendment or elsewhere in the Constitution that can support these decisions. All of this is pure, shameless legislation from the bench.

Since a big majority of the nation's parents would be happy for a prayer to occur at a ceremony – at least as long as their child was not somehow forced into active participation – it should be obvious that these court decisions are trumping democracy. In my opinion, these decisions do not reflect the wishes of most parents – whether they be Christian, Jewish, metaphysical, secular, or even moderate atheists. For the record – traditional prayer has held no meaning to me for several decades, as I view my relationship with spirit and divinity to be different than that. Even so, I fully appreciate and respect the good will offered in prayer by anyone at these events. But the sad fact remains that there are some few zealots, on the fringe, who are more than happy to use their children as pawns in any political cause. And it takes only one such parent and a willing attorney to turn an entire school system and student body on their heads. It may dawn on wise people that atheism, materialism, and disbelief in spirit are religious positions, just as surely as is a traditional belief in God. Atheism also is a religion, as there are many active atheist organizations, and even a few churches. Some atheists believe that they have a civic duty to evangelize militantly, for the salvation of humankind. The atheist fundamentalists behind these troubles are merely trying to get the State to give special respect to their religion – and to prohibit the free exercise of others – directly contradicting the First Amendment.

There are other important church-state issues besides those affecting public schools. Some want to prohibit the display of the Ten Commandments in court houses. Others want to drop "under God" from the Pledge of Allegiance, and remove "In God We Trust" from printed money. Opposition to elective abortions is largely a religion-driven issue. The Boy Scouts have long been considered a private, religion-sensitive organization, even though they are not a religion. The Scouts, traditionally, have required a belief in God as a condition for membership. To date, they also continue to reject scoutmasters who are openly gay – a religious issue as well as a social one. Some court challenges have been levied against them, on the basis that scouting has become such a universal activity that they've lost the right to set their membership standards.

Globalism has brought home an additional angle that I doubt the framers had in mind when formulating the First Amendment. Their view of religious diversity was entirely Anglo-European, with the effects of later Third World immigration scarcely contemplated. What happens when the practices of a religion, or the culture it fosters, seriously clash with the majority sensitivities of American culture? Should we permit the free exercise of all religions, without exception? Some practitioners of Santeria – a blend of Catholicism and voodoo – may kill small animals with knives in religious rituals. In contrast, growing animal-rights sentiment has gotten people prosecuted for shooting an unwanted or unhealthy dog or cat. By prevailing court trends, I'd expect the judges to punish an owner for euthanizing his own animal instead of paying a vet, but to allow the religious practice with impunity. What about public calls to prayer over the loudspeakers of mosques in American neighborhoods? Can a practice that is noble and respected in some cultures be a public nuisance in others? If this issue has not yet become a serious flashpoint in America, it soon will.

Even some mainstream Western religions have policies and practices that deserve serious public scrutiny. The pedophilia that has plagued the Catholic church in modern times is not just some aberration or glitch, and it can never be fixed by more diligent management alone. It is the 100 percent predictable result of the policy of celibacy for clergy – an issue Judaism never had. Such a policy, itself, is a crime against spirit, as well as nature, applied to the church's very leadership. It thwarts the healthy drives and desires of normal religious men, but also provides a convenient haven for misfits to hide in exalted positions. Note, however, that it is not absolutely enforced. Married Episcopal and Anglican priests can convert to Catholicism and remain wed,

and Maronite Catholic priests from the Middle East can be married. It's within the province of the church to eliminate celibacy, and all of the sociopathic acts that it fosters. Judaism has a questionable side, as well, in connection with circumcision. There are some today who feel that the involuntary circumcision of infants is child abuse, and that the religious practice should be banned. In 2011, almost 8000 San Francisco activists signed an initiative that would have put a circumcision ban on the November ballot. A judge later ordered the initiative off the ballot. For the record, I'm not one of those detractors. I strongly support routine male circumcision, for non-religious reasons. The elimination of the foreskin – probably a protective carryover from more rugged eras – carries both medical and sexual benefits. I've heard and read zealous arguments to the contrary, but suspect that many of them are driven by thinly veiled anti-Semitism. Yet, it's no more radical than removal of wisdom teeth, and is much less traumatic. Nevertheless, there's a dirty little secret in Orthodox Jewish circumcision. After a *mohel* (circumciser) removes the foreskin, he often uses his mouth to suck the blood off the penis. Now, if this were openly done to an infant by anyone else, including a doctor, he'd be hauled off to the slammer for child abuse, and he'd probably be labeled a sex offender for life. Just how far is our culture obligated to go to accommodate religious beliefs? It's well that Congress does not have much appetite for regulation of religious practices, as they'd often violate majority will if they did. Direct Democracy, however, does not have that liability. The voters should have every right, if they so choose, to regulate circumcision in any manner, and to lock the doors of any religious institution that denies its followers or leaders the right to marry and raise children.

So-called States' Rights issues are common reactions to the activism of the federal courts. They are raised when court decisions run counter to the sensitivities of voters in a particular state. As in Texas, the state may seek to restrict abortions and gay marriages when federal sentiment supports them. Or, as in California, the state may seek to legalize marijuana while the feds are prohibiting it. Occasionally I may find myself supporting the States' Rights side, but only over the specific issue. It's good for the People to fight back when the feds are trumping democracy, but the very concept of States' Rights raises serious concerns. We're not just talking about such things as highway speed limits. It causes serious social fragmentation and contention when abortions are legal only in some states; when certain people can be legally married in one state but not in another; when people of only selected states can smoke pot or use peyote; or when different states have differing laws over the acceptability of religious practices. States' Rights, in principle, is really a horrible idea. But it is divine saving grace when faced with the prospect of having the politicians and courts use the invisible ink in the Constitution to butcher democracy.

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The only possible way for democracy ever to prevail again in America is to allow national votes on all important issues. It is mandatory that these votes carry constitutional weight. Otherwise, the courts would overturn any that displease them, just as they've done with some of California's ballot initiatives. The formula for Direct Democracy, as recommended in a later chapter, is a way for the American People to take back their streets, their schools, their churches, and their dignity.

Chapter 16

Protecting Whose Marriage?

Of all the American social attitudes that have gone into states of flux since 1950, one of the most perplexing and intriguing is the perception of homosexuality, including the issue of gay marriage. Technically speaking, activist judges, in mandating gay marriage in some states, have legislated from the bench and overturned clearly-established law – a privilege that rightly is reserved for Congress. Using their crystal balls once again, they tapped the non-existent writing in the Constitution to justify their rulings. Even so, the legal technicalities alone cannot prove that gay marriage is morally right or wrong, nor determine whether or not it is the best policy for America. It is questionable whether the judges even trumped democracy in this case. There are sizeable factions of the public that support and oppose gay marriage; and another that supports marriage-like civil unions for gays, but is against calling it "marriage." This leads to the issue of gay adoption – and especially whether the law should permit a child to have two legal "mothers" or "fathers." Clearly, homosexuality, in all its ramifications, is undergoing major scrutiny within the public psyche. Perhaps the most divisive factor underlying the whole debate is a widespread and emotional disagreement as to why a significant number of adult men and women are gay.

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To the fundamentalist camp, all homosexuality is acquired after birth and is a state of depravity. The religious Right views all humans as direct children of God, rather than as products of physics, genetics, and random environmental forces. Since there is some negative mention in the Bible of homosexuality, it is a violation of God's will; and God would never have made anyone gay. In questioning this stance, it is reasonable to ask why God would create a child with missing limbs, or with a life-threatening condition. The Right would answer that God's will and wisdom are sometimes hard for humans to understand. In any event, gay lifestyle is a choice, whereas the deformities are not. Aside from their conclusions, the arguments of this camp are dissatisfying to those outside their ranks, because they wholly ignore scientific issues raised in psychology and biology. Evidence has surfaced in recent decades that many gay men and lesbians have certain brain lobes that are slightly larger or smaller than those of their straight counterparts. It is a reasonable question as to whether these differences were present in them as children, or whether protracted gay lifestyle induced any of the changes. Did the brain differences predispose these people to be gay? Or are they the product of same-sex energy, or of specific types of sexual activity? Any of these possibilities are scientifically thinkable, but the Right seldom takes any interest in science once its religious conclusions are drawn.

The far Left, unfortunately, is just as intractable as the Right. They tend to quote scientific evidence when it appears to support their political conclusions – and just ignore it when it does not. The Left maintains that homosexuality is always inborn rather than a choice, and will throw angry tantrums at any suggestion to the contrary. However, good science often shows that diverse causes can produce very similar results, especially in the sciences pertinent to human behavior. Perhaps in time, science will show that some people are hard-wired from before birth to be gay. However, there is a bit of long-standing popular wisdom, at least centuries old, that is indisputable to most reasonable people. Boys and teens who are lured into having sex with other boys or men during their formative years sometimes can become gay adults as a result. Aside

from the legal issue of pedophilia, the Left might say, so what? If a boy's activity was consensual, what's wrong with his becoming gay? Others – even those with moderate political leanings and tolerance of gays – might say that bridging the gender gap and being successful in a heterosexual lifestyle can bring great practical, emotional, and social rewards. The early gay activities sometimes can result in the arrest of that development, and so might be comparable to a teen becoming addicted to tobacco or another drug.

Actually, all the science in the world cannot, alone, determine what is the best social policy. True human values invariably are rooted in emotion, rather than logic. This is why the simple, anonymous yes/no votes of true democracy are vital to ensure that majority will is not trumped by any competing political interest. However, science and logic can improve our understanding of the world, of ourselves, and of our fellow man. That process often changes emotion, and thereby fosters more enlightened values. Sensible people are slow to judge, and enjoy being as informed as possible before making important decisions.

As discussed in chapter 2, good science does not rule out any reasonable possibility – especially when it has some elegance as an explanation – as long as it has not been thoroughly disproved. Factors for scientific consideration that might result in someone's being gay could be biological, experiential, or spiritual. On the latter point, I'll share my knowledge of what past-life recall – both my own and that of numerous colleagues – has revealed on this issue. Almost everyone who has experienced numerous lifetimes, and has recalled many of them, runs into an occasional gender switch. Perhaps these result from a desire for diverse experience, and to see things from the viewpoints of others. Nevertheless – and this is controversial even within the metaphysical crowd – my very strong impression is that spiritual beings have an inherent male or female gender of their own, that is consistent with the majority of their incarnations. In all of my lives in which I've been spiritually awake enough to be "me," I've been male. I've formed all of my important and enduring spiritual connections as a male, most notably with a few female soul mates. I do recall having had emotional difficulties as a straight female in one life, and having been a lesbian in at least one other. (No, I didn't burn in hell for it!)

The following are a number of factors that come to mind that *might* cause an adult to consider himself or herself gay, or to adopt a gay lifestyle. I'm not claiming that any of these have been proven scientifically, but only that they all warrant consideration by people who are sensible enough to put science and wisdom ahead of politics. And note that I'm *not* offering these as medical advice, not being a physician, but only as the speculations of a layman in the pursuit of political and constitutional change. These points may apply both to males and to females, but for convenience I'll state them as applying to a male. (Gee – how politically incorrect!)

- Genetic or other biological factors "hard-wired" him to be attracted to men, but not to women.
- Gay sexual experiences – consensual or otherwise – during his formative years caused him to assume this orientation.
- He had a psychologically damaging relationship with his mother or with another woman.
- He was sexually abused by a member of the opposite gender.
- He had deep emotional challenges in relating socially to girls and women, was unable to find effective professional help, and found it easier to become gay than to work through these himself.

- Some form of retardation or a clinical mental illness prevented formation of good opposite-sex relations.
- Serious psychological and social damage from heavy drug abuse left him unsuited for relations with the opposite sex – or for any substantial relationships.
- Genital abnormality impeded his ability to have intercourse.
- Sheer lack of physical attractiveness or poor personality development caused him to be shunned by females.
- He became gay as part of a rebellion against very repressive parents, who also abhorred gays.
- He had extremely liberal parents who told him as a young child that he could be either gender he wanted, and he listened to them.
- He was the soul of a woman in the body of a man, and could not adjust to romance with females. (But he might make a good interior designer!)
- Heavy unresolved karma and emotional charge from past lives, particularly involving opposite-sex relationships, affected his sexual orientation.
- He was a male, both spiritually and physically; but cosmic boredom prompted him to have an alternative experience in his current life. Spiritual beings *do* make prime decisions – but note that these *are* choices.

The prospect of someone's seeking professional help due to difficulty in relating to the opposite sex brings to mind what I think is an unfortunate knee-jerk reaction in political correctness. Back in the era of my birth, it was not unheard of for parents of a gay-leaning teen to take him or her to a shrink to get fixed. As these tactics often were unsuccessful, and as more tolerance of gays became the norm, it became more common for counselors to encourage a client to accept his or her gay impulses, and even to act on them, rather than to form a guilt complex over them. I've no doubt that these changes have been a blessing to any number of gays, who otherwise might have had a guilt trip over something that either was not a choice, or that they had a right to choose. Nevertheless, in a human world, overkill is often the norm. From snippets I've picked up from the news in recent decades, there is a strong bias in the counseling community against treating anyone with an intent of helping him or her be comfortably straight. Their licensing and accrediting agencies have adopted these policies. A counselor might be punished for deviating. But what of the shy young man who feels so tongue-tied around women that fear of failure causes him to avoid them? What of the woman who was raped as a young girl, repressed the memories at length, and engaged in a few lesbian relationships even while having mixed feelings? If their problem is *not* specifically being gay, don't they deserve to have their real problems addressed? No doubt, some counselors have the sensitivity and good sense to sort out what really is going on with a client, and proceed accordingly. But with a disciplinary gun held to their heads, political correctness can trump science – even within the scientific community. The result is industry-endorsed quackery. Imagine the disservice to the mentioned man and woman if their counselors immediately embarked on a crusade to help them accept the fact that they're gay. Some might hypnotize them and give them suggestions to that effect, or prescribe drugs to help them quit worrying.

As American citizens and voters we all can benefit from the wisdom brought to us by every wing of the scientific community. However, if we want to live in a sane and balanced society, it

must be a two-way street. It has occurred to me that an important principle of real democracy is this: *No special interest ever should be considered capable of governing itself.* It is vital that American citizens all across the political spectrum be eternally vigilant toward every corner in which imbalance and evil can lurk. As voters we must, from time to time, police and clean up even the policies of our professional communities. And Direct Democracy ensures that we have the tools to do just that. Does majority rule always ensure wisdom? Of course not. To err is human. But I'd put money on the wisdom of the voting electorate in a heartbeat, before I'd willingly leave the fate of my country and culture in the hands of the politicians or the courts!

In the Western world, the day is past when consenting adults are prosecuted for being gay. Even teaching that someone will burn in hell due to a homosexual lifestyle is bigotry that should have died with the Dark Ages. It is inflammatory and tends to fuel gay militance, such being human nature. Many on the Right feel – correctly – that heterosexual commitment and family are healthy values that should be venerated and protected. However, fundamentalist absolutism and condemnation of gays as "sinful" are very short-sighted attitudes. Those positions actually hurt the pro-family cause by alienating many of the more liberal straights. A significant percentage of today's heterosexual men and women have experienced voluntary same-sex encounters at some points in their lives, especially while young, without ever considering themselves to be gay. The fundamentalist position insults even these straight people, some now married parents, who ever have voluntarily crossed the lines. But when people are alienated, they tend to unbalance themselves in the opposite direction. The most healthy values and social policies can best be supported when people are not forced to choose between extremist camps.

Another important dimension in these matters is seldom debated politically, and usually is swept under the rug. It has long been the case that a sizeable fraction of women of all ages experience some occasional bisexual interest, while being predominately straight and usually desiring a male life mate. The main recent trend is that more of them are candid on popular dating websites, and their typical comments give validity to many of the observations that follow. Most such women will not consider dating a man who is bisexual, insisting on straights only. Involvement with another female may occur when a woman wants to avoid the emotional demands of a relationship with a man, as after a breakup or divorce; and at other times due to strong affinity or attraction. This, of course, would never work with males. A mature man who is bisexual does not have a solidly masculine gender identity, and usually is regarded as essentially gay. Beyond youthful curiosity, it takes a distinctly effeminate quality to desire or enjoy sex with another male. Some on the Left may call this asymmetry a social bias, but they are outnumbered in Western culture by moderates who know it well to be true. Many women who have experienced such leanings become happy and successful wives and mothers. Some hold relatively conservative social values, and may even be skeptical of gay marriage. Some (gasp!) might support a Republican president. But insults and condemnation by fundamentalists easily push some of them toward leftist political positions and affiliations, as a matter of defense. Of course, it would be interesting to know how many right-wing politicians ever have participated in a threesome involving two women! Men in certain cultures, especially in Africa and some Middle Eastern countries, are so threatened by female sexual drive and independence – even with men – that they engage in circumcision of their daughters, removing the clitoris. This impairs a woman's sex drive, and sometimes makes even intercourse painful or non-pleasurable. This practice, and the cultural mindsets that support it, are the ultimate in sexual sadism and subordination of women. Insecure people in the West inflict what damage they can via religious and emotional abuse, and leave it at that.

It is conceivable that, overall, most people stand a chance at a happier and more fulfilling life if they incarnate as the gender that is most natural to them as spirits, and are successful in committed heterosexual relationships. However, most people also would be happier to have bodies that are the epitome of good health, and that are very attractive. When people find themselves facing challenges, and circumstances that are not ideal, they might deserve a bit of blame only if they have brought on the challenges through poor choices in the current lifetime. But the reasons for life's challenges are diverse, and are the products of a flawed system – the Trance, in a word – even more than the products of personal choices in the current life. Making life far more utopian for everyone is a noble purpose, but it is a collective responsibility. It involves the lengthy, systematic cleanup of consciousness on multiple planes. In the meantime, the best policies are pragmatism, understanding, and thoughtful tolerance, as humankind still struggles with consciousness that is decidedly muddled.

Consciousness in many important sexual and romantic issues clearly is changing, among gays and non-gays alike. My understanding is that the US military has long had a law on its books prohibiting its members from engaging in "alternative" sexual practices such as oral – even if they are married. It's a wonder they didn't require the man to be on top! I doubt that this law has recently been enforced. But the decision to permit gays to serve openly in the military will likely cause any such law to be officially repealed – including for heterosexuals.

Despite contemporary tolerance for what adults do in their bedrooms, there are social issues regarding gays that are not so easy to dismiss. It is illegal for an adult to have sex with a minor. But due to "Romeo and Juliet" considerations, these laws often do not apply if the couple is close together in age. Yet, it is reasonable to ask whether the exemption should apply to same-sex relationships. The Left would want gay relationships treated equally. Others may be concerned about emotional damage to minors under the age of consent.

An ironic twist occurred just a few days before I wrote this chapter. I was sitting in a Starbucks coffee house and observed a couple of young men at a table. Their gender was unmistakable. They appeared around age twenty. They were rubbing their legs together, stroking each other's thighs, and holding hands; and they engaged in light lip kisses two or three times, while glancing around and acting a little embarrassed. I can't speak for California, but in Texas this tended to be a little startling. They had every right to be gay, and seeing them did not warp my psyche. However, children frequent these places; and young ones often tend to mimic what they see. If the two had been a straight couple, nothing would be thought of it. And even some affection that may be routine, non-sexual behavior for two females is clearly sexual when between two males. Exactly where should the line be drawn on what constitutes lewd public behavior? If they had been asked – quietly and politely – to move their activity to a more-appropriate setting, could they have sued over civil rights violations? Of course they could! All it takes is a willing attorney. Although nothing in the Constitution or statutes supports it, different courts would render different rulings. The store management might have settled confidentially – with money and an agreement to alter their policies – to avoid the cost of protracted litigation. And more of the taxpayers' money would have been wasted on what should have been simple management discretion. Remember the lost art of "delegated authority" from the last chapter?

Many years ago in one of my places of employment, a coworker was a young gay man in a clerical position. He was known to live with his boyfriend. He seemed social and appeared to do his job well. However, he did attract some attention. Often in the evenings before leaving work, he'd splash himself with far more cologne than any woman ever would use. It would waft around the area and cause people to be amused at him. I had no personal concerns about him or his

situation, but the anecdote raises more general questions about gays and employment discrimination. Should anyone be able to claim illegal discrimination in hiring or promotions on the basis of their being gay? If odd habits annoy others, might they claim that these habits are a part of their own culture, to which they're entitled? What if they want to cross-dress at work? And with gays now serving openly in the military, should they expect legal entitlement to equality in assignments and promotions? These questions are in a state of flux, and ad-hoc rulings by state courts and city councils have only complicated the matter.

Then, of course, there's the transgender issue. Does sex-change surgery facilitate a legitimate medical or psychiatric need? Or is it a way for some surgeons to make a few bucks from a troubled patient? Should private or national medical insurance pay for it? Is it even ethical to perform it, or would it be unethical to deny it? Should a man altered in this manner be legally recognized as female? Which restrooms should he/she be welcome to use? Should he/she be legally required to disclose, upfront, to being transgendered, in situations such as application for employment – or especially before a first date with a man? Just because this stuff has been happening for some time does not mean the issues are settled. For example, some states that do not recognize gay marriage currently will not process a divorce application of someone who is transgendered. If these issues are a bit bewildering, any citizen should grit his/her teeth at the thought of leaving them to the politicians. In Texas, however, we are a tolerant folk. We traditionally recognize all gender changes that occur through reincarnation. And unless the American People vote otherwise, I'd expect our tradition to continue.

Disintegration of the traditional family should be of great concern to all citizens. I have great respect for single and divorced parents who do a good job of raising their children. But an awful lot of us believe that, other things being equal, a kid stands a better chance of success in life when raised by a dad and mom who are in a committed relationship. Even the Hermetic and Qabalistic doctrines examined in earlier chapters make clear that the masculine and feminine components of consciousness are rooted deeply in the divine. They must interact in elegant equilibrium to induce optimal spiritual and social health. There are many social and economic factors that currently have the nuclear family in trouble. The Apocalypse – going full tilt since 1950 – has been ripping social consciousness apart at its seams, so that it has the opportunity to find its footing again in a higher reality. But radical change can be very painful and perplexing, in passing. Gay liberation certainly is not the cause of the collapse of the family, as the alternative was just repression, denial, and often infidelity by those not suited to the straight life. Nevertheless, one of the problem factors is a disdain for the traditional family that has been promoted by the far Left. As a Qabalist, I believe that there are deep spiritual reasons for the enshrinement of heterosexual marriage and the family; and feel that it is very healthy for a society to place this institution on a pedestal – elevated above all else. If anything, we should be paying married couples to have children, rather than paying women receiving welfare to have more children out of wedlock. The decades-old tradition of employers providing medical insurance to spouses and children has reflected society's perception of the importance of the family. This raises questions about whether insurance benefits should be extended to gay couples, or to straight couples who are not in a marital commitment. Of course, it's nice to be kind. But conversely, the spiraling costs of privately funded and tax-funded healthcare affect all of us. There are only so many rabbits that can be pulled out of the hat! If gays adopt kids, or if gay women are artificially inseminated, then these are arguments to provide them family health insurance. These are complex issues to be dealt with in the public psyche.

The many issues cited are too fundamental and important to our civilization to be decided by

politicians, or by elite courts that are not accountable to the People. The majority votes of citizens across the political spectrum, on an issue-by-issue basis, are the only way to ensure that the true public conscience prevails. In recap, the following issues all should be subject to direct popular vote:

- Should gays have marriage-like civil unions available that facilitate issues such as inheritance and powers of attorney?
- Should gay unions legally be called "marriage" – and the partners called "spouses, husbands, and wives"?
- Should gays of both genders be legally free to adopt children or become foster parents? Should lesbians, or any single women, be artificially inseminated?
- Should it be lawful for a child to have two fathers or two mothers?
- Should state-provided and employer-provided healthcare insurance cover partners who are not legally married?
- Should psychiatrists and counselors be allowed to attempt, or prohibited from attempting, to help a client be comfortably heterosexual? Should licensing agencies and clinics be required to publicly disclose their policies, and possibly alter them?
- "Romeo and Juliet" laws may exempt an adult from statutory rape charges over a relationship with a minor, when they are close together in age. Should this exemption apply to same-sex relationships?
- Should behavior with a clear sexual intent between two males or two females be considered public lewdness, when the same behavior between heterosexuals would not be? Pointedly – what if the behavior occurs in public schools? Should schools and other establishments have the legal right to prohibit obvious gay affection, without having to prohibit routine heterosexual affection as well? What about on airlines, if passengers – possibly with children – complain about two men kissing in the seat in front of them?
- When public schools give space to various student social groups, should their granting of space for gay-themed groups, when requested, be permitted, prohibited, or required?
- Should anyone be able to claim "group protection" and illegal discrimination in employment issues, based on their being gay? Should current local laws to that effect be honored, eliminated, or made the national standard?
- Should transgendered men legally be considered women, and have all the rights and privileges of natural women?
- When we elect the next gay President, will the First Faggot's tuxedo go in the Smithsonian? Or his evening gown? *Well . . . ?*

The simple existence of gays, and gay relations between consenting adults, certainly is no cause for national alarm. However, the queer state of law and politics in this arena should send shudders up the spines of everyone concerned with the future of his or her culture. Citizens from both ends of the political spectrum are as passionate about these issues as any. Moderate citizens should be passionate about them as well – and should insist on nothing short of a healthy balance that truly reflects the national conscience. The hodgepodge of laws and court rulings is highly divisive to us as a nation. Direct Democracy is the one and only means to ensure that no special

interest trumps the democratic will of the American People, and that our collective will prevails in the spirit of national unity.

Chapter 17

Life after the Death Penalty

The death penalty remains a contentious national issue, with the Right generally supporting it and the Left generally opposing. The greatest problem, in my opinion, is that most citizens on both sides of the issue rather mindlessly carry forward the traditions of their own camps, using arguments that really don't hold water. Lawyers defending their clients will oppose it on even more inane grounds. Metaphysical studies provide alternative views of many spiritual issues. And the ongoing public awakening to the reality of reincarnation is ground for a profound rethinking of traditional ideas about death. More liberals and Judeo-Christians alike are embracing past lives, so this awakening has the potential to bring many of us together who were irreconcilably apart in the past.

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The Right traditionally has been concerned with justice as a means to rid society of evil. No serious crime should go unpunished, and the punishment should fit the seriousness of the crime. Execution is viewed as the most extreme punishment, and so it should apply to the very worst criminals. After all, many of these types are viewed as incorrigible, and killing them rids the world of them. Ironically, there is a faction within fundamentalism that opposes the death penalty. One reason, in particular, is the notion that you only live once, and then you end up in heaven or hell. Killing a criminal might increase the chances that he'd end up in blazes, whereas keeping him alive might give him a chance to repent and receive eternal salvation.

The Left has a tradition of being anti-war, and has tended to object to killing almost anyone. The Left also has opposed the death penalty because it tends to affect certain minorities disproportionately to their numbers in the population. The Right would counter that the penalty is in proportion to the number of serious crimes committed by each affected ethnicity. The Left would cite society's failure to ensure that no one has a dysfunctional childhood, regardless of ethnicity; and it uses this guilt trip to repudiate executions.

Some on the Left use a slightly more intelligent argument against the death penalty. They cite the number of cases in which criminals have been wrongly convicted, only to be proven innocent years or decades later. But many of the same liberals also would object to the death penalty if the assailant and his crime were captured, indisputably, on national television. DNA testing has been a great boon, in recent decades, in conclusively determining guilt or innocence. I once argued with a very liberal attorney about the merits of the death penalty. He cited the significant number of convictions that have been overturned by DNA testing that was not available at the time of the trials. I countered that DNA testing is one of the very best arguments to maintain the death penalty, as an option in many new convictions. Perhaps whenever there is the slightest doubt of guilt, we should settle for a prison term. But when DNA testing at the time of the trial leaves no doubt as to the perpetrator's identity, then it's not logical to say that such testing is a reason to abandon all executions. There might be *other* good reasons; but DNA certainly is not one of them.

Defense attorneys feel that they have a mandate to do anything possible to help their clients. They will kick and scream. They will try to overturn established law through arguments that have been offered countless times before, hoping to find a sympathetic judge this time. One of

the most inane arguments is to oppose virtually any means of execution as "cruel and unusual punishment" that violates the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution. It takes high school logic, at most, to see the intent of this amendment. A judge or jury – angry over the murder of a prominent citizen in their community – could sentence the killer to be dragged behind a pickup until his head falls off. Congress clearly wanted to prevent the use of such creative meanness. But ask anyone on the street whether it is cruel to kill someone, and the answer, almost invariably, will be "yes." Ask whether it is cruel to lock people in a building against their wishes, and the answer will be the same. Verdict: Any punishment is cruel, even if sometimes justified. It's a reasonable question as to whether any means of execution should ever be considered "cruel and unusual" if it does not shock the public conscience, and was prescribed by Congress or a state legislature as a standard procedure. Most defense arguments are over whether the procedure – lethal injection as a prime example – is totally painless. Gee, it might hurt! Never mind that medical procedures used to treat innocent people can cause far more pain. Never mind that the original crime caused much worse pain to many. Never mind that being imprisoned causes mental anguish, and that execution is the end of that suffering. Such waste of time and tax dollars in the courts will continue until there is a constitutional amendment to stop it. And many death penalty opponents cheer these attorneys on. I respect anyone who offers a rational argument against the death penalty – or even a purely emotional one. But I have little sympathy for anyone who tries to get his or her way through legal smoke-blowing.

It will be well to take a look at the intents behind all legal punishment – especially imprisonment – and then see how the death penalty stacks up against these intents. First and foremost, we want to protect the public. We want to remove a dangerous person from the streets, and retain him until there is some reasonable chance that the danger has passed. We want to deter others from committing similar crimes. We want to penalize the person, according to the severity of the crime, hoping that his coming to see the error of his ways will make him less dangerous. In addition, when possible, we want to rehabilitate a person in other ways, such as education and therapy. But there are two things that clearly are not desirable outcomes. First, we should not want to release an incorrigible person to strike again. And second, we certainly do not want to subject a prisoner to any kind of needless cruelty, or to such ill influence by other criminals that that his anger multiplies and his criminal mindset is bolstered.

If prisons were run in an ideal manner, the above-stated goals could be optimally pursued. In practice, multiply the number of serious criminals by the cost of incarceration, and it becomes obvious that the utopian prison system – as desirable as it may be – is wholly out of reach for the foreseeable future. Guards cannot watch prisoners every minute, and it is impossible to monitor their conversations. The rapes that make the news are a small fraction of those that occur. Bullying and intimidation is rampant, and prison gangs turn these institutions into crime colleges for many prisoners. The luckier ones go to a federal lockup for white collar crimes, or get grouped with other low-level offenders in county or state jails. The state penitentiaries – for men, especially – are utter hell holes. If a prisoner comes out rehabilitated, it is by the sheer strength of his own will and character. The others will offend again, and often are much the worse for the experience.

How does the death penalty stack up against the foregoing? It may be a deterrent against some premeditated murders, or the killings of police officers. It has given a measure of closure to grieving families who often attend the executions, and who feel that anything less would fall short of justice. It usually applies only to callous perpetrators of the worst crimes, and to serious habitual offenders. These types rarely are rehabilitated, and many die in prison. In the meantime,

they lead the way in intimidating other prisoners, teaching them hate, and schooling many of them in the ways of crime. The death penalty may be a desirable way to get the worst of the worst entirely out of the loop. But it also may be the best route to the rehabilitation of the worst criminals in the shortest time frame. Most career criminals are overwhelmed with life, having become incorrigible sociopaths in their current incarnations – and yes, in some cases, it started with a dysfunctional childhood. Sending them on to their next lives stops their sociopathic behavior in its tracks; gives them another chance and setting in which to get it right; and is a merciful end to their overwhelm, as all demands of the current life are removed.

To avoid executing innocents, it may be well to require greater certainty of identity and guilt than simple eyewitness identification of a stranger. But another problem with the death penalty is the great cost and the many years of litigation that always precede execution. For those proven guilty beyond doubt, it would be well to constitutionally limit the kinds of arguments and the number of passes through the court system that defense lawyers can undertake.

The you-only-live-once tradition has created a mystique that identifies a soul strongly with his or her current body. It's promoted a morbid attitude about death due to its apparent finality. It affects those on the Right who believe in an afterlife, as well as some on the Left who don't believe in spirit; but with somewhat different implications. While the Right worries about terminating the one lifetime that God has given a soul, the atheistic Left gets really stoked up about the "rights" of a human being who has but one life; and who, when it terminates, will be no more. These attitudes have great implications for the death penalty, and also for numerous other death-related issues. It will be well to take a comprehensive look at them.

Worries about executing someone and sending them to hell are some of the most spiritually ignorant notions. When a soul has lived millions of years' worth of lifetimes on this planet and others, he or she has engaged in every kind of troublemaking thinkable, at one time or another. It all just goes with the turf. It is divinity seeking diverse experience through each and every one of us, all of whom are agents of divinity. And getting executed occasionally, after ticking off too many people, is just a part of that diverse experience. It's happened to many of the best of us, at one time or another. People who, admirably, are trying to make planet Earth a better place sometimes just can't imagine ever having been so reckless – until they receive some kind of individual or group regression therapy, and begin to remember it. If you don't believe me, search the Web for groups in your area and try it out. It can be very liberating to realize that you've been no stick-in-the-mud; and that, at one time or another, you've had a lot of fun that your mother never would approve of! Forgetting all your past-life adventures is kind of like having sex while you're crocked: If you can't remember it the next day, then what's the point?

It should concern enlightened and rational people that so much money is spent on funerals and burial plots, and that land is being consumed for this purpose – apparently forever. Aside from military and historical settings, ordinary graves hundreds of years old are left intact; but most are visited rarely, if at all. It is becoming more popular to cremate and scatter the ashes of the deceased. But many are stuck with empty urns. What do you do with them? They might sit in a closet or attic for generations, because it seems too undignified to throw them in the garbage. A more sensible, minimal-cost procedure would be for the mortuary to place the ashes in a simple, white cardboard container. After scattering, the container could be returned to the mortuary for incineration or appropriate recycling. Better monuments to a deceased person are artifacts of his or her life, rather than remains of the corps. Families keep such mementos as long as they are meaningful; and they tend to evoke fond memories and joy, rather than sadness and morbidity. Such artifacts can even be displayed, in tribute, at memorial services that are more upbeat than

traditional funerals. When ordinary cemeteries have been inactive for perhaps 100 years, the land might be recycled for better use.

The issue of assisted suicide is gaining national attention, and it has been made legal in some states such as Oregon. If a woman who is in severe pain and wants to die is killed as a mercy by her husband, he will have to endure some serious legal heat. But if doctors were to sign her off as being terminally non-viable, shouldn't she have every right to end her life with dignity? For a spiritually enlightened civilization, is it not barbaric to tell her that she will have to suffer endlessly, until her body no longer can sustain even this agonizing existence? It also puts big money into the pockets of the medical world for her to stay alive, receive extended care, and be pumped full of expensive pain killers. What about that Hippocratic Oath by medics to "do no harm"? If it once sounded noble, is it now an excuse to keep non-viable bodies alive by every exotic means known to 21st century science?

Back in the 1950s abortion was thought of as an ultimate act of shame, without regard to the circumstances. The stereotypical picture was a girl from a "good family" who had gotten pregnant. She might have had an abortion to hide her shame, but if the child had lived he might have led a very worthwhile life. Some courts even ordered the fathers to marry these girls, to "give the baby a name" and to protect the nuclear family. Obviously, times have changed in numerous ways. When "nice girls from good families" get pregnant, they are not nearly as likely to seek an abortion, provided their temperament and circumstances are suited to parenting. Over the years, I've personally known of a few situations in which out-of-wedlock pregnancies occurred. (No, I didn't personally have the fun of making any of those babies. Shame on you!) An abortion occurred in one case in which the birth would have thrown the lives of both young parents into long-term chaos. The couple were not socially compatible for marriage, and the culture of the girl's parents might have caused them to harm her. In stark contrast, another case resulted in the birth of a wonderful child, and the later marriage of the child's parents. Conclusion: When people are free to make personal decisions, whatever needs to happen generally does – much more often than not. When Big Brother interferes in their decisions, all bets are off. But Big Brother might do very well to offer free abortions and sterilizations to poor, unwed mothers, rather than fatter welfare checks in reward for additional babies. And then there are some conceived bodies that should not continue living, from the word "go." It now is common for doctors to determine that a fetus has serious abnormalities. Abortions often are chosen in these cases. Yet, some on the Right still object. Obviously, God in His Wisdom intended to send a baby into the world who was retarded or was missing limbs. It is not the right, even of the expecting parents, to interfere with God's decisions.

A few years ago I was sitting in a restaurant. Near me, there was a party that included a girl who appeared to be in her teens. She was profoundly retarded. She was strapped into her chair. She drooled from the side of her mouth, and uttered only squeaking noises. She had to be bottle-fed by one of the adults with her. Think of the implications. First and foremost, we presume that an incarnated soul is occupying that body. But what a pitiful life for a soul to live! If a person, out of sheer meanness, were to deliberately induce such birth defects in someone's baby, then society would be outraged and demand heavy retribution. Perhaps there actually *are* instances in which "cruel and unusual punishment" could be justified! Yet, if the quirks and malfunctions of imperfect Nature cause the same conditions, some want to restrict even a parent's right to intervene. If that non-viable body had been terminated before birth, this same girl could now be riding a bike, learning piano, dating her sweetheart, studying nuclear physics, or caring for her own wonderful children. Of course, this also leads to the issue of euthanasia for those with non-

viable futures, and with the inability to speak for themselves, regardless of their ages. Whatever the current rational of sustaining such a life, a spiritually mature civilization cannot help but see it as sheer barbarity.

For the spiritually enlightened, death is just a part of life. When timely, it is the ultimate mercy and release from suffering. For a civilization to be mature and healthy – both tangibly and spiritually – it must actively deal with all aspects of timely death, just as it deals with the rest of life. Nurturing is the means to make the best of what we currently have. Timely death is what prevents an individual, civilization, and planet from stagnating, and allows them to move on to better things – whether the death is natural, voluntary, or sometimes involuntary. Winter is the death of foliage and insects, so that fresh life can be renewed in the spring. Military combat brings an end to troublesome subcultures, dictators, militias, and terrorist groups. Self-defense brings an end to the threat of a dangerous criminal. Capital punishment brings an end to an overwhelmed and incorrigible ego, to the benefits of that soul and the civilization. The deaths of the elderly bring an end to suffering and non-viability, and also end rigid egos and ideals that are past their time. The death of a fetus with serious defects ends hardship for that soul, and for those who would have to provide care, before it's become a serious and expensive problem. And as the Apocalypse proceeds, it promises to bring the deaths of polarized fundamentalism and liberalism, in favor of balance, enlightenment, and spiritual liberation.

An untimely death seriously disrupts promising lives, and causes needless heartache for the survivors. Deaths that truly make the world a better place are always morally justifiable, just as is any event or act with a similar effect. Human laws and restrictions on causing death result from a practical reality. Caught up in the passions of the moment, misguided individuals and groups can cause untimely deaths for countless petty reasons. So due process is needed to administer this weighty matter. But these are Man's laws exclusively; and as a civilization matures, it must revisit its laws and mores from time to time. Stone tablets are a really nice trick for rulers and politicians, in an immature and gullible culture. Putting Man's words into God's mouth places them beyond question!

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The best arguments for or against capital punishment are those based on certainty of guilt, and on the costs of prosecuting capital cases vs. the costs of incarceration. In my humble Texas opinion, keeping the death penalty on the books helps keep a culture from getting too soft. And it keeps a maturing civilization reminded of one of its more profound spiritual responsibilities. With Direct Democracy, the People can vote as they choose on this important issue – and on all of its nuances. And if public sentiment changes over time, the People can again vote accordingly. But perhaps most important, we can bring an end to the theatrics and waste of resources being poured through a farcical legal system.

Chapter 18

Universal Medical Overwhelm

WARNING: I'm not the Surgeon General, nor even a physician. Don't try any of this at home! This chapter is critical of a number of commonplace medical policies and practices, in the pursuit, by a layman, of legal and constitutional reform of the medical industry. None of this is medical advice. If you want medical advice, please visit your doctor.

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Just how to make healthcare affordable to most Americans is a raging debate in Congress, and a big issue in Presidential and Congressional elections. Almost everyone feels that the current system, on entry to the third millennium, is highly inadequate; and yet the American voters are very divided over what solutions to adopt. But now let's frame the debate within some realistic parameters. The rich will always be able to afford the best healthcare that science has to offer. The very poor never will, simply because they cannot easily afford other necessities of life, such as food, clothing, housing, utilities, cars, or college for their kids. Solutions for the highly impoverished need to address employment and all the needs of life, so that they are not poor anymore. The real barometer of whether the healthcare system is properly tuned is whether the working, blue-collar, lower middle class can afford reasonable medical treatment about as well as they can afford other necessities. Has that ever been the case in recent American history? You can bet your boots it has! It was that way in the 1950s when I was a kid. Obviously, a lot has changed since then. So it will be well to look at the medical status quo of that time, and then determine what later went wrong.

As the saying goes, "The devil is in the details." But if you'd care for a short-and-sweet list of the major things that have gone wrong, here they are:

- Science has advanced the frontier of standard healthcare beyond anything that American culture can possibly afford, for the foreseeable future.
- The medical industry capitalizes on secular and religious obsessions against natural decline and death, to make heroics and exotic treatment the norm for the terminally ill and the elderly.
- The organ transplant market is an obscene cash cow for its providers, and is a prime example of the foregoing.
- Fear of lawsuits and criminal prosecution presses doctors and the families of patients into exotic treatment, and radically increases the cost of malpractice insurance.
- Healthcare availability has become tied to corporate employment, as opposed to family income.
- And finally – the biggest culprits of all: *Health Insurance, Health Insurance, and Health Insurance.*

Is the greatest expense in maintaining your car an oil change, a tune-up, a front-end alignment, or a fender dent? The fender dent wins, hands down. Small dent – $1500. Medium dent – $4000. Big dent – often more than your car is worth. Why? Most body damage is covered

by insurance. Routine maintenance is not. Mechanical issues are not, unless they resulted from a collision.

Aside from the basic costs of providing goods or services, prices in a free-market economy are driven, not by what each individual can pay, but by what a majority of individuals can pay. Business owners are not magicians. They are human beings, and they feel economic pressures as much as the rest of us. Most will charge about as much as they can for a product or service while remaining competitive. Only competition exerts some downward pressure on prices. When insurance is thrown into the equation, the numbers come out different. Whether automotive or medical, the single rightful intent of insurance is to help people weather unexpected and non-routine catastrophe. The expectation is that if all policy holders pay an affordable premium, these funds will permit the insurance company to cover most costs for anyone experiencing a serious and exceptional crisis.

Medical insurance was just getting off the ground when I was a kid. It often was referred to as "hospitalization insurance." It did not cover trips to the doctor's office, or much of anything other than major illness or injury. It was indemnity insurance that paid a large percentage of any major expense, regardless of who the medical provider was. HMOs and PPOs did not exist. To my recollection, my parents did not have medical insurance until I was several years old. My mother was a homemaker, and my father was a meagerly paid accountant. Yet, he had no serious trouble paying for my birth in the local hospital, long before he had medical insurance.

In the decades after the advent of "sensible" medical insurance, the blessing evolved into a curse. The story went something like this: Many employers provided insurance as a hiring incentive. Before long, more families than not were covered. Insurers began adding some doctor's office services to their policies in an attempt to attract more customers. Over time, the prices charged for all medical services – catastrophic or otherwise – underwent a stealthy increase that greatly outpaced inflation. The public was too busy to notice. After all, they had insurance! They'd only grumble a bit when premium prices edged up, and tended to blame their insurer or employer. When people noticed that their own portions of medical costs were beginning to pinch, many clamored to have even more minor services covered. For the insured, the effect was something like this: Before insurance, they could afford most medical costs with only minor grumbling. With insurance, they *still* could afford most medical costs with only minor grumbling. But there was one big difference. Collectively, Americans had unwittingly become addicted to, and dependent upon, medical insurance.

A side effect of the public's addiction to insurance has been to chain more people to the corporate rat race. Which is to say, being in the service of those "artificial persons" we looked at in chapter 14. At one of my previous places of employment, there was a woman who cashiered in the company cafeteria. I recall her remarking that she did not need her job for the pay, as her husband had sufficient income. She held the job only to get the company's generous medical and dental insurance for her entire family. She certainly was not alone in her plight. There are many people who would prefer to work for a small company, or even to start one of their own; but who, nevertheless, accept corporate employment against their best wishes – solely to receive health benefits. There also are women who would prefer to be stay-at-home moms for the benefit of their children, but who find themselves in a similar quandary. Making healthcare out-of-reach for all who are not employed by big business is both anti-family and un-American, as it flies in the face of self-reliance and the entrepreneurial spirit.

For the uninsured, the effects of insurance were far worse. With medical costs spiraling upward, only the very affluent could afford to self-pay for anything major. And even for minor

office visits, the expenses became much more painful. This generated considerable political pressure. Politicians wanting the votes of the poor and uninsured got the government thoroughly involved in the insurance business. This, in turn, increased taxes on the public and on businesses. And with the additional coverage available, all medical costs upward-spiraled at an accelerating rate. Of course, doctors were enjoying larger incomes than they did during my childhood. But shareholders of for-profit hospitals also knew that more money was exchanging hands, and they demanded their cut. So for every shot in the arm (or elsewhere) that anyone received, he or she – as a patient and as a taxpayer – was now paying not only the enhanced salaries of medical personnel; but also the stipends to insurance companies, the costs of expanding government programs, and the pay of the employees and shareholders of all the foregoing.

To make matters worse, many hospitals and physicians routinely charge uninsured patients more than they usually charge insured ones – as diabolical as this sounds. This is partly covered up by their giving some charity to low-income patients. But unless you can make a very good case for poverty, many of them will put the screws to you. They often hide this by giving the patient a generalized bill with some verbiage describing the services rendered, followed by a total dollar figure. With insurance companies they must provide itemized bills with medical procedure numbers and names, and the costs of each. This allows the insurers to query any questionable item. Some years ago, during a period in when I was uninsured, I had a freak accident while hiking and required a few stitches on my face – limited to my forehead and nose. A young doctor at the emergency room did a reasonable job with the repairs. But some weeks later I received a bill from him (in addition to the hospital's bill). It had only one dollar amount and no procedure numbers. The description of treatment included stitches to my "ears" and other places, on which there had not been a scratch. As I was extremely busy with other life dealings at the time, I chose not to fight it; but feel that almost certainly I was gouged on the price as well. A reasonable requirement would be that all medical billing must include procedure names and numbers, as well as itemized costs. For example, this would include the exact number of stitches in each spot, and the cost of each.

As if all the above weren't bad enough, the advancing frontier of medical technology – while apparently a blessing on the surface – compounded the problem greatly. When my 84 year old father was hospitalized a few months before his death from congestive heart failure, I watched an attractive, young medical technician roll some very exotic equipment into his room. It looked like something out of a sci-fi movie. As she operated the machine for perhaps a half hour, I watched brilliantly colored mathematical graphs flash repeatedly over the screen. She was recording the exact behavior of his heart to a precision rivaling physicists' measurements of particle behavior in an accelerator. As can be expected, it did nothing to cure his illness. He passed away at home four months later. But it allowed the doctor and the hospital to show, for the record, that they had explored every possibility known to science to find ways to prolong his life.

It's no wonder that, at this writing, healthcare accounts for about a sixth of the American economy, and is on track to hit one fifth. Some of it is due to HIV patients, who now typically live a couple of decades or so. The average cost to keep just one of them alive is over a half-million dollars. Think that most of them self-pay? Dream on! Then consider hyperactive kids misbehaving in school. At present it's more politically correct to prescribe them drugs than to paddle their backsides, or even to suspend or expel them, all of which can trigger lawsuits. But this trend also gives them the lifetime stigma of having received treatment for a "psychiatric disorder." Foster and group-home children are especially vulnerable. And – outrageous in my

view – national spending on psychotropic drugs for kids has surpassed their use of antibiotics and respiratory medicines. Of course, the pharmaceutical and psychiatric industries are more than happy to lap up the big profits!

I can recall the media reporting the success of the first heart transplant. From the standpoint of science, it was a tribute to the genius of humankind. As long as such exotic treatment was exceptional, and not considered standard regimen, it was a technological triumph. And it was an adventure for a patient who would go to that length to prolong his current incarnation. As long as private or scientific-research funds were paying for it, who could object?

Today's cut-and-paste transplant industry is a high-dollar, high-stakes rat race. Sick patients wanting to cheat death are on long waiting lists. Organs thought to be "compatible" are flown around the globe via jets and helicopters. "Compatible" means that as long as the patients receive advanced care and take anti-rejection drugs for the rest of their lives, there is a fair chance that they'll survive for a few more years. Somewhere in the wavers these patients sign is fine print acknowledging that anti-rejection drugs can compromise their immune systems, and can increase their vulnerability to additional maladies. Yet, you can bet that the medical industry is making money hand-over-fist. They are doing so because they have convinced doctors and the public that such exotic care is reasonable enough to be routine and expected.

Doctors' fear of lawsuits, the guilt-trips of relatives, and politicians' fear of losing votes have pressed this long-simmering disaster to the breaking point. Heart transplants have even been given to prisoners at taxpayer expense – around a million bucks when follow-up care is included. If doctors don't recommend the most exotic possible treatments known to the industry to prolong a patient's life for a few more years, they open themselves to lawsuits by surviving relatives – allegedly out of grief, but just as easily out of elated and calculated opportunism. Medical boards can strip doctors of their licenses for not pressing for the scientific maximum. This is all the more understandable, because many doctors and those on the medical boards are heavily invested in the pharmaceutical and medical equipment industries. In plain vulgar English: The cash-cow goes dry when the patient croaks!

In the days of my youth, of course, there were no organ transplants. But a healthier attitude prevailed about death taking its course. Death of a loved one is always a sad thing. But if a very ill or aging relative clearly were waning, the impulse was to provide comfort and support until God took him or her back home. Of course there always has been religious and social sentiment for respecting and prolonging human life. But with the standards greatly raised, patients' relatives can feel guilt and shame for not attempting to provide the ultimate that science has to offer. Some who still live in fundamentalist-propagated fear of eternal retribution, along with its you-only-live-once philosophy, may feel that they are risking their own eternity if they fail to take compassion to the limit. If a relative donates a kidney, it might be out of love – especially if the patient is the donor's own child. But when such exotic measures are taken only to give an aging or unhealthy patient a chance at few more years, the personal and dollar costs are highly questionable. In the Third World in particular, some patients and other humans are killed by criminal medical groups, so that their organs can be harvested for profit. Many are shipped to the US and Europe. Recipients would never know. Would you want such an organ in your body?

Politics – as is its character – takes things to the limit. With the medical industry and lawsuit-happy attorneys having established science-fiction healthcare as the contemporary norm for the insured, the uninsured and impoverished begin to demand an equal slice of the pie. And the politicians fear divine retribution at election time if they don't provide it. So we come down to this: A poor woman on welfare, who has had alcohol and drug problems, and who has had

multiple babies out of wedlock, finds one of her vital organs understandably crumbling under the pressure. Doctors and hospitals don't want to be sued. An organ is flown halfway around the world. The county hospital may write off a little of it as charity – meaning charity out of the pockets of local taxpayers. The big bucks are paid for by Medicaid – and we all know very well where the feds get their funds from. And some wonder why the nation is over its head in debt? Why medical insurance, itself, is no longer affordable to the average citizen? Why even the pills for a sore throat are practically priced out of reach for many who lack insurance? Why many employers are increasing employee insurance costs, reducing coverage, or eliminating insurance altogether? Except, of course, the coverage for their highly paid executives who don't need it at all, since they could self-pay! But, then, there are the yachts, the sports cars, and the country club fees. . . .

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What are the alternatives? First we should look at several to avoid. Talk about some immortals being in a Trance! Well-meaning and compassionate types who have not yet awakened to smell the coffee still aspire to solve the world's problems by giving everyone lollypops. Some want to get many "alternative" treatments – from chiropractic therapy to vitamins to acupuncture and Reiki – covered by insurance. They don't realize that if this happened on any scale, the costs of all these items soon would follow the way of conventional medicine. Others want socialized medicine similar to that provided in Canada and Sweden. This brings to mind the old saying about where the grass is always greener. Frankly, I have it on the direct word of a friend who is a Canadian citizen that her country's quality of healthcare does not nearly match that available in America. It's well to note that one-size-fits-all solutions don't work for every culture – except in the Trance-driven minds of some extreme political Progressives. The Swedes pay a dear portion of their incomes for universal healthcare. Their tightly knit and homogenous society, with high cultural empathy, makes communal living more thinkable. They receive state benefits, but feel the obligation to carry their shares of the load responsibly. America, in contrast, achieved her now-shaky greatness through a long tradition of personal responsibility and self-reliance. This tends to promote more innovation and a higher quality of medical care. And except for the damage inflicted by the insurance industry, it preserves the satisfying tradition of freedom-of-choice for patients seeking a doctor.

The most toxic lollypop solution to gain notoriety, at this writing, was championed by President Barack Hussein Obama, and enacted into law by a very liberal Congress. It amounted to trying to make the medical dragon that's been eating our lunch for a half century meet our current needs by feeding it more, and growing it into an even bigger dragon. Kind of like shooting more heroin to quit feeling the effects of protracted heroin use. One of the worst parts was legally requiring citizens to buy private health insurance. What a boon to the insurance industry! The insurers and their shareholders have everything to gain. Honestly, even though the Swedish solution is not right for America, it's better than Obamacare (®??). If Medicare were expanded to cover all citizens, the increased tax burden would be staggering. At least the revenue would be used to pay for this program – or for other government nonsense. But a government-mandated purchase is a tax, even if it's not called one. And as this toxic lollypop becomes reality, the American People will be paying additional taxes to large private companies and their shareholders. There also is an important difference other than economic. Insurance plans are full of hazy fine print and smoke-blowing, and different companies handle the details of coverage and payments in differing and unpredictable ways. But what taxpayers have the time or means to sue an insurance company over small-to-moderate injustices? With our government directly

providing single-payer healthcare, at least the citizens could read the exact wording of the applicable laws, and then take up any complaints with their congressional representatives.

Right-to-die is a related and important issue. One of the most famous cases was Terri Schiavo of Florida. Her husband sought to have the brain-damaged woman's feeding tube removed after recovery appeared impossible. As her spouse, he had the legal power to make these decisions. But due, in part, to the objections of some of her relatives, Governor Jeb Bush and the Florida legislature – in the tow of the fanatical religious fringe of the GOP – passed a law to prevent her husband from exercising his rights. That a family would desire to hold out for the revival of a relative is humanly understandable. But for others to interfere in a family's affairs for political reasons is a travesty. A few months before her death, it came out that Florida voters opposed the new law about 3 to 1. And the politicians claim to be representing their constituents? After courts overturned the barbaric law, Terri passed away in 2005 after spending around 15 years – and a staggering fortune in medical and legal costs – in a vegetative state. I've yet to read that the religious zealots and lunatics behind this fiasco ever offered to pick up the tab. And in some similar cases, after doctors and families have signed off for a patient to be removed from life support, some hospitals have blocked it. Why shouldn't they? They're making money hand-over-fist!

There is plenty that is wrong with the way the nation has been handling healthcare for quite some time. However, a prerequisite to truly resolving the political and business problems is a new debate and consensus, by a majority of the public, on some fundamental attitudes about medicine, and about life in general. Here are some of the needed changes in the public consciousness:

- The realization that insurance – whether private or nationalized – is the worst possible approach to any and all aspects of routine, non-catastrophic healthcare in America. This also involves dispelling a very unhealthy something-for-nothing attitude, and replacing it with an unwavering resolve to steer the national culture back to its roots of self-reliance. The only rightful area for some slack, in my opinion, is Medicare for the elderly – in conjunction with its twin, Social Security. But that only with the caveat that Medicare should cover pills, shots, and appendectomies – not heart transplants.
- A great reduction in individual and family expectations about ever receiving the more exotic and expensive treatments offered by science, including most organ transplants. Family discussions and the filing of living wills rejecting exotic treatment are helpful, as long as the medical industry considers such treatment the norm. If the rich want such treatment and have the private means to pay for it, we should let them get on with their agendas without jealousy.
- Less blind trust in the medical industry to offer the best advice in all cases. Fear of lawsuits, discipline by medical boards, and pressure from medical suppliers has biased healthcare providers distinctly toward over-treatment. In addition to studying alternative health methods, consumers would do well to inform themselves about medical practice and drug therapy – not to practice medicine on themselves and each other, but to know the right questions to ask their physicians. Personally, I never fill a prescription without looking it up in a professional reference to assess risks and side-effects. (For a list of medical references, see appendix B – Bibliography and Suggested Reading.) There are some doctors who rebel against their industry's trend toward extremism, but they risk paying for it by the loss of their licenses. The Constitution should grant physicians the

right to dissent, in consumer publications such as books and health letters, without fear of discipline. Any abridgment of free speech – including the free speech of those with inside knowledge – is a formula for tyranny.

- A healthier and spiritually enlightened attitude about death as the end of suffering and non-viability, rather than as something morose. Death needs to be seen as it truly is: a profound and merciful gateway to rejuvenation and health, and the joyous continuation of life.
- A firm distaste for suing doctors and other medical personnel over the death of a relative, except under the most extreme circumstances in which malice or willful criminal negligence is involved. And even in that case, criminal charges would be more appropriate. Problems of incompetence are best taken up with medical boards and regulators, to protect others in the future. Perhaps torts for financial damages should be permitted only after a related conviction or license revocation, or after a blatant medical accident. Otherwise, a doctor's responsibility for injury or death is highly speculative, and settlements drive up the costs of medical care enormously.
- A decisive shift away from the unconditional prolonging of human life as the ultimate moral or ethic, and replacing it with the maximizing of the quality of life for all concerned. This means a willingness to take direct responsibility, under appropriate circumstances, for one's own death, or for the death of a non-viable person in one's charge. This is not an invitation to lawlessness. Indeed, it requires the resolve to get federal and state laws changed appropriately – a national debate and process that's already well underway. Let's call a spade a spade: This ethical shift is what some fundamentalist dinosaurs call "playing God" and what enlightened immortals call "higher spiritual responsibilities."
- Give the terminally ill and terminally non-viable the right to end suffering, and to make a prompt transition with as much dignity as possible. For a spiritually enlightened age, anything short of this is barbaric. For those who cannot speak for themselves, doctors and close family members should have the legal right to make the decision, even in the absence of a power of attorney. Conversely, more-distant relatives, judges, governors, and political activists should have absolutely no legal standing to intervene.

Some physicians, admirably, are advocating much more understanding, dialog, and teamwork between doctors and informed patients. In a recent book of interest both to physicians and to consumers, Drs. Jerome Groopman and Pamela Hartzband write,

> Despite many scientific advances, the unsettling reality is that much of medicine still exists within a gray zone where there is no black or white answer about when to treat and how to treat.[1]

Uncertainty over what treatment is necessary – or even advisable – adds more fuel to the debate over private and federal insurance coverage. With a majority of patients insured, doctors have an increased incentive to opt for aggressive and expensive therapy. And with insured patients paying relatively little at the time of treatment, they lack the incentive to consider what really is cost effective. Their pockets have already been picked via insurance premiums or taxes, and so

[1]. Jerome Groopman, MD and Pamela Hartzband, MD, *Your Medical Mind: How to Decide What is Right for You* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2011), p. 6.

the patient mindset is often to receive what they've already paid for.

Rest assured that the author practices what he preaches. I'll go to a doctor when needed. I've taken antibiotics, and probably would agree to a blood transfusion if ever required. I've had a broken arm set, and had stiches a couple of times after accidents. But a major organ replacement? No way. A face transplant? I'd definitely choose death! Major surgery? Depends – the jury's still out. Death does not frighten me. My only disappointment would be dying without accomplishing my more important life goals – especially whatever I can do to leave the world a better place for posterity. To me, death is preferable to protracted suffering, or to lengthy institutionalization, in some attempt to hold on until the last possible breath. And the last thing I'd want is to be a continuing burden upon anyone else. When the day comes that my life is neither enjoyable nor productive, I'd prefer to check out as soon as possible. After all, I've got much better things to do, and would want to get on with the show!

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Aside from public attitude changes, curing the nation's addiction to excessive medical insurance is complex, and would need to be implemented very gradually to keep it from being too painful to bear. Every recognized medical procedure, all of which are assigned reference numbers, needs to be scrutinized. If not catastrophic, or done in connection with treating a catastrophe, all insurance covering them, excluding Medicare for the elderly, should be phased out. For example, insurance companies could be required to pay a decreasing percentage of the costs over perhaps 30 years, and then zero. This gradient is needed because prices would not come down immediately in the absence of insurance. And after all, the insurers will need to adjust to reduced business – something they'll fight to the hilt. Procedures such as appendectomies, which are catastrophic but reasonable to perform, still could be insured, along with all related expenses. To wit: "hospitalization insurance," which is the only kind that ever should have existed. An even more serious debate needs to occur over organ transplants, and over a myriad of expensive treatments and tests. According to the public conscience, many should be decreed to be "exotic" or "non-standard" medicine. If a billionaire wants to pay for these things, then more power to him. It's one of the perks for being rich. Insurance companies, employers, and the government should be prohibited from covering exotic procedures – even via Medicare. And doctors should be utterly shielded from lawsuit or discipline over failure to press for exotic treatment. A doctor should be expected to recommend no more than the patient – with or without insurance – can reasonably pay for. And a public vote should be required before a costly new treatment, medication, or test can be considered a standard procedure.

As for how to keep hospitalization insurance, itself, from being too costly, the public can debate and settle on solutions that it is comfortable with. A possibility would be the long-term elimination of for-profit hospitals and surgery centers. If the charity to support a non-profit system is inadequate, then government funding of these institutions is a possibility. However, socialized medicine always comes at considerable costs – monetary and otherwise – so due caution is vital.

While on the subject of medicine, there are a few areas other than costs in which the public would do well to demand changes. Managed care – HMOs and PPOs – place big, for-profit corporations in charge of the doctor-patient relationship, and can affect a doctor's decisions about the course of treatment to recommend. It can be difficult for a new doctor to be successful without joining these organizations, but the same organizations often limit the number of doctors they'll admit to their ranks. Also, they often demand that doctors participate in all of their plans, or in none at all. This can contribute to a shortage of doctors in many geographical areas –

especially primary-care physicians. Indemnity insurance plans do not have as many detrimental effects. Because of the pressures to hold down costs, some doctors will treat their patients appropriately, and then report altered or reduced treatments and charges to the insurer – deciding to absorb part of the costs in some cases, but possibly inflating them in others. They will cover this up by not giving any printed statement of treatment to patients on certain insurance plans. I personally have experienced this on occasion, depending on the insurance I had at the time.

A second problem is a tendency of some primary-care physicians to play "psychiatrist" when their patients have requested only physical treatment. I know of a stable and accomplished gentleman and family man (now deceased) who went to a doctor with a complaint of stomach pain, suspecting ulcers. The doctor decided that the pain was likely in the man's head. He prescribed a psychiatric drug without informing the patient of the diagnosis. His daughter researched the drug and informed her father, who discontinued it immediately. But almost all of these psychotropic drugs can have many negative side effects, and are very contraindicated for patients who don't need them. Worse, the trend toward electronic patient records that are easily passed around raises many privacy concerns. For one, if a quack has decided you're a "head case" then that can taint your record with other care givers, and possibly employers, in the future. A reasonable requirement is that a physician may not diagnose or treat a mental disorder unless the patient has sought treatment for such, or unless it is ordered by a court. A mandatory, accurate, and complete itemized medical statement also would help address these issues.

A third problem is an understandable tendency of doctors to group together in large clinics, to save money. They do this partly to counter the exorbitant cost of malpractice insurance, and to consolidate so as to better fight frivolous litigation. However, the scarcity of independent practitioners can have detrimental effects on the doctor-patient relationship, and on patients' freedom of choice. Subordinate doctors working for a managing doctor are more likely to treat patients in the way they feel will avoid criticism from their bosses, as opposed to their best independent professional judgment. In particular, this may result in over-prescribing and over-treating. As for freedom of choice, I saw this problem first-hand in my family. My mother had long seen an eye doctor that she liked and trusted. But he was a partner at a large clinic, as were almost all of the other ophthalmologists in her city. When he moved out of state, she was not even asked if she cared to choose one of the other doctors at the clinic. She was told that her files had been transferred to Dr. "X" and that he was her doctor now. But naturally he was one of the least popular, with fewer patients. She never was comfortable with him, and was leery of his judgment and skills. She might have requested another doctor, but embarrassment is a big factor in such cases. To avoid such problems the public might do well, in the long run, to demand restrictions on the number of doctors, dentists, ophthalmologists, optometrists, chiropractors, and the like, that can share a clinic or operate in any kind of partnership whatsoever. But this issue might be addressed slowly and thoughtfully, remembering that the doctors, themselves, are coping with the same draconian system as are their patients.

Of course, good health for American citizens is not entirely a medical issue. It's also an issue of healthy lifestyle. While the latter is partly a personal responsibility, the government and the food industries bear considerable responsibilities as well. As a pointed example, in his book, *In Bad Taste*, physician George R. Schwartz discloses numerous dangers from the MSG (monosodium glutamate) that pervades many prepared grocery items and much restaurant food. He also exposes the ways the food industry can hide it in their labeling, and why the Food and Drug Administration won't do anything about it.[2]

[2]. George R. Schwartz, MD, *In Bad Taste: The MSG Symptom Complex, New Revised Edition* (Santa Fe, New

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With a system of Direct Democracy in place, the People can address these issues as they will. They may choose to throw all my recommendations out the window and follow in the steps of the Swedes. Nevertheless, I'm confident that the public, when duly empowered, will mandate a far-healthier scheme than the cut-and-paste, open-heart surgery that the politicians have been performing on American healthcare.

Mexico: Health Press, 1999).

Chapter 19

Fratérnitas Juris Pandemonium

This chapter contains the observations and speculations of a layman exercising his right to free speech, in an effort to promote American legal and constitutional reform. None of this is legal advice. A reader desiring legal advice should consult a licensed attorney. *Whew*. Now that I've offered the standard disclaimer, I can trash the legal system with impunity!

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From the time most of us were kindergarten age we have been taught that the American government is "Of the People, by the People, and for the People." That may have been the case when the nation was founded, but any such assertion today is a bald-faced lie. What actually exists is a blurry, but very real, plutocracy – rule by big money. It hides behind a superficial democracy that does give the citizens a little clout in electing representatives. Nevertheless, the system is programmed to make it exceedingly difficult for a would-be representative to get into national office without towing the lines drawn by the plutocrats. And the few well-intended ones that slip by are too outnumbered to make much difference.

A factor that led to this black hole into which the nation has fallen is rooted in human nature, and in natural socioeconomic processes. Generally speaking, a company can become a virtual monopoly without committing any evil acts – but simply by becoming experts at what they do, and by doing it better than anyone else. It takes regulation from the outside to prevent elements in industry from becoming monopolies. With all the trash-mouthing lawyers take, they really are engaged in a necessary and honorable profession. By years of legal study and experience in the field, many of them become very knowledgeable and very good at what they do. It is quite understandable that a great many of the nation's politicians come from their ranks. Not being intimidated when on familiar turf, they have the potential to operate competently as state representatives or Members of Congress. But here's the rub. A very high percentage of America's lawmakers and judges are lawyers. Collectively, they wield the power to regulate every detail of all activities that occur in America, including their own legal profession. So if they're good at what they do, why has the public developed such a distaste for them? Monopolies usually don't fall into public disfavor by being incompetent. They fall into disfavor by adopting the excesses and misplaced priorities of all who acquire too much power. It's human nature. If any of us could quintuple the average income of all those in our own lifelong professions, we'd be hard-pressed not to do it. The legals, in effect, are a self-protecting fraternity. Recall from chapter 16 the important principle of democracy: *No special interest ever should be considered capable of governing itself*. With the legal guild left alone to police itself, it should be no surprise whatsoever that they've acquired excessive power. The missing ingredient that can restore legitimacy to the legal profession and heal its image is for the American People – democratically and by popular vote – to have the last word on all legal issues affecting the nation, and on the very nature and workings of the legal system itself. Of course, a constitutional amendment implementing national Direct Democracy is the most decisive step in that direction. Therefore, it will be well to look at some specific areas in which the legal system is in need of reform, and that could be addressed by Direct Democracy. A couple that come to mind are lawsuit reform and jury system reform.

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Lawsuits are lawyers' big cash cow. There has been some movement in recent years to punish lawyers for filing frivolous lawsuits, and to limit the damages awarded in others. However, the restrictions passed in some states barely scratch the surface of practices that horrify much of the public. One problem is that, in general, anyone can file a suit against anyone, anytime, and for any reason. The defendants do not have to be accused of breaking any particular statute, and there does not even have to be a precedent for the suit in established law. Suits over breach of contract are understandable, provided they are factually legitimate. But other suits often are referred to as "torts." They amount to a plaintiff telling a court, "Somebody didn't treat me right, so I want redress." And in general, judges and juries have the ability to award damages to anyone, based on often-creative and inconsistent notions of fairness. As was discussed in chapter 15, judges can use their crystal balls and psychic abilities to read the invisible writing in the Constitution of which the framers were unaware.

Many times, defendants settle suits by paying something to the plaintiff without any admission of wrongdoing, and without any judgment from the court. They do so, solely to avoid the expense of a protracted court fight; and the amounts of the settlements are often kept confidential. The courts often encourage such settlements in lieu of trials. The legal profession has lulled much of the public into a half-hearted acceptance of these practices as necessary and appropriate. However, compare these with another real-world example: Somali pirates currently are a major problem to seagoers on the Indian Ocean. They hold people hostage, but generally will release them unharmed once a substantial ransom has been paid. They do this solely because it's lucrative, and the governments of other nations have not yet mustered the will to stand up to them. Yet honestly, how are these lawsuit settlements, in the absence of a court judgment of wrongdoing, any different in principle from piracy on the high seas? Both are based on the notion that if I'm better-armed than you are, and you can't fight back, then you have to pay. If plaintiffs had to represent themselves in court without attorneys, far fewer questionable lawsuits would occur. But lawyers encourage clients to sue for one simple reason: overall, the lawyers win no matter what. If an attorney files ten suits and gets damages out of only five, he or she makes enough money to write off the other five as overhead. The losing plaintiffs get nothing, and the defendants in all the cases are put through hell and expense. Even when a defendant wins, it's often not feasible or cost-effective to countersue.

The following are some examples of suits I've read of over the past few decades that were bound to raise public ire. They were widely publicized at the time. Some are from mental notes, and so lack many details; but the points should suffice. My intent is not to make judgment on their merits, as if I were a judge or juror, but only to point out the questionable circumstances under which they were filed or settled:

- A prisoner sued a state prison system because it did not provide him with crunchy peanut butter.
- A homeless man spent considerable time in a public library in a small town. Library management eventually asked him to leave. When he sued for monetary damages, the library management maintained that he seriously offended patrons. They said that he smelled bad due to poor hygiene, used the restrooms for token bathing, and sat for hours staring at other patrons. They said that rather than using the library for its intended purposes, he was using it as a place to flop. No court ever issued a judgment on the merits of the case. The small town eventually agreed to pay the man and his lawyer a cash

settlement, simply because they did not have the funds to fight the case to conclusion.

- A man was pitching a business deal to another man in a restaurant. Closing time came around, but they kept talking. As the evening grew late and management wanted to lock up, they informed the men that it was well past closing, and that they needed to be on their way. The business deal fell through, and the pitchman sued the restaurant for the fortune that he would have made if the deal had been successful.
- In 1998 a US appeals court ruled that a county sheriff could not ban pictures of frontal nudity from the county jail, saying that it violated prisoners' rights. The sheriff had maintained that prisoners often got into fights over the material, and used the pictures to taunt and harass female guards. For quite some time, it's been popular to give women protection from harassment in the workplace. But it seems that lustful prisoners have an even higher priority.
- Many states have laws under which convicts can be compensated monetarily for time in prison, if it can be proven conclusively that they are innocent. Because many convictions are thrown out on technical grounds, and sometimes are retried, this compensation is intended only for those whose factual innocence is proven in court – such as by DNA testing. But many who remain under suspicion by prosecutors and are not cleared by a court will sue the state at significant cost to the taxpayers, whether or not they prevail. They do so because their attorneys encourage it and no law prevents it. One such case was publicized in July 2011: Two Mexican citizens, whose murder convictions were overturned with an order of new trials, were suing for $12 million each.

Lawsuits over breach of contract can be legitimate, where there are actual damages. However, it has become all too common for businesses to sue other parties over expected income that never materialized. If a business spends $40,000 on materials in pursuing a joint effort with a contractor, and then the contractor dumps the deal, it's understandable that the business would seek to be compensated for its costs. But if they expected to make a million off of the deal, they often will sue for that amount. Even if they don't collect the million, the contractor may settle for more than the $40K, simply to avoid litigation. Why not? The lawyer's third of $100K is a lot nicer than a third of $40K.

Another questionable lawsuit mechanism is the "default judgment." This happens when a party is sued, and neither they nor their lawyer show up to defend them in court. On the surface, this might seem to have merit. But considering that many frivolous suits do get filed, put yourself in the position of the defendants. Many people are overwhelmed with life, struggling with jobs and children as well as finances. When they get served with a suit summons over something incredulous, it's understandable that they don't say, "Oh, I'll just pick up the phone and get my attorney to handle this." Responding to any suit – even if it's preposterous – costs time and money that many people don't have. But with the ethic long-established by the legal profession, anyone not responding to a frivolous suit becomes the lawbreaker and deserves to pay, even if for no other reason. And it can be extremely hard for these parties to countersue later, even if the original suit clearly was malicious.

Tort reform has been an issue in some state legislatures for years; but it has progressed very slowly, with the legal industry fighting it at every turn. Limits on punitive damages, especially in medical malpractice cases, has made just a little progress. There has been some advocacy for pay-if-you-lose laws to discourage meritless lawsuits, but only some baby steps have been taken along that path. An all-too-obvious mechanism is wholly missing: When any party files suit

against another, the plaintiff should come under extensive scrutiny by the court to prove that it has a solid case. The court should play the devil's advocate, and should hire outside legal experts to testify when warranted. Then the court's approval should be required before the defendant even can be served notice, and before any mention of the suit is made public knowledge. The plaintiff should be liable for all of the court's review expenses, whether or not the case has merit. If it does have merit, such expenses would effectively come out of eventual damages paid by the defendant. And the defendant, if ever served or inconvenienced in a meritless case, should be awarded significant actual and punitive damages. In most cases, the plaintiff's attorney should be the party stuck with the bill, and might pass some of it through to the client if that is in accord with their agreement. Of course, if the plaintiff is a big corporation, then the artificial person and its attorneys should be held "jointly and severally" liable for all damages – legalese that many lawyers hold dear to their hearts. If well-implemented, this would end the practice of an attorney filing ten suits so as to win five.

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While some kinds of legal-system reform are popular, and are making slow progress, the elimination of jury service throughout the United States of America has hardly even been whispered. But the author intends to make a very strong case for it. Well, *honestly* – it's no more radical than past-life recall, but it's a lot harder to ignore!

Jury service has long been a bedrock of Western justice. Yet, there are some Western countries that don't use it at all. There is no jury service in Israel, where cases typically are tried by three-judge panels, nor in several European countries. The perceived need for juries started in the feudal ages in Britain and Europe. Peasants accused of wrongdoing were hauled before a noble. Often enough, they were guilty simply because they were poor and dirty. To avoid dissent and revolt, the need was acknowledged for people to be tried "by a jury of their peers." When the jury was made up of a social caste similar to the defendant's, they'd have more empathy and understanding. Yet, even peasants don't like thieves and crooks, so they still could convict someone if the evidence supported it. Although a noble judge might preside over the trial, this practice gave the eventual judgment much more credibility. If the verdict was "guilty" the judge could claim impartiality and point out that the defendant's peers convicted him. However, don't think for a minute that judges and lawyers, even in the beginning, didn't play a great role in handpicking jurors!

Many Americans dislike jury duty and try to avoid it. But many others feel that even if it is an occasional inconvenience, it is a civic duty that they enjoy fulfilling. They may even feel that they are bringing balance to the system, and that without juries the judges would run amok. At this writing, I've been selected as a juror for only one trial. It was a short, 3-day murder trial. A woman from a poor neighborhood was accused of killing her boyfriend while he was sitting drunk on the house steps and mumbling obscenities about her. Several of their friends were present, and they testified in court that they saw her stab him with a knife – a point that she did not even contest. But she testified that she saw the knife on the ground, picked it up, and just accidentally swung around and rammed it into his chest as he stood up. We had the choices of not-guilty, manslaughter (with a lighter sentence), or murder. For a good while, the jury was divided between the latter two. Some of the female jurors, in particular, leaned toward manslaughter because of the abused-woman hypothesis. Even though she did not claim that her boyfriend physically threatened her, he at least had been foul-mouthing her. So a few women on the jury felt that she was just fed-up and snapped under pressure. A majority on the jury, including the author and even some of the women, felt that he had not done anything to deserve

death; that her uncontrolled temper was more the issue; and that murder was the appropriate verdict. But things were headed toward a mistrial over the disagreement. The jury foreman and I led the way in careful diplomacy that eventually resulted in a unanimous murder verdict. We acknowledged that if there were any room for sympathy, we could deal with that issue during sentencing. I even felt a bit of civic pride in playing an active role in the process and avoiding a mistrial. After we delivered the verdict, the woman was afraid of the jury and chose to have the judge alone do the sentencing. But it shortly came out that the woman already had served time in prison for killing a previous boyfriend. The judge, accordingly, gave her a life sentence.

The judge, no doubt, knew of the previous conviction from the outset. But Texas law allows juries to consider prior convictions only during sentencing – not in the guilt/innocence phase. Like most juries, we had been paraded in and out of the courtroom so that we would not hear anything that might "bias" our judgment. A little common sense might prevail, however. If this had been a "who-done-it" case, not finding a defendant guilty just because of a prior conviction makes good sense. But in the choice between manslaughter and murder, it takes no lawyer to see that her prior conviction for murdering a boyfriend was altogether relevant. If prior time in the slammer had not taught her to control her temper, then a light sentence or probation certainly wouldn't do the trick this time. Yet the applicable law, which is used in most or all states, almost resulted in a mistrial in this case. And that outcome would have meant inconveniencing yet another jury, and wasting more tax dollars on yet another trial. But the reason for this law is simple: With the feudal caste system existing only in the annals of history, jury duty in America today is not about an inability of judges to render fair verdicts. It's solely about the desires of courts, lawyers, and the whole legal system to avoid criticism and claim "fairness."

"But I served on a jury, and we made a difference. We could have found the defendant guilty or innocent." That's an easy assumption, as jurors are lectured to about civic duty and pride before even being selected for a jury panel. Yet, most citizens are unaware of just how little difference their jury service makes in most outcomes. "Guilty" verdicts routinely are appealed, and often are overturned. New trials may be ordered, simply because the jury was not paraded out of the courtroom when a comment was dropped that might have "biased" them. (Jurors must be very stupid. Shouldn't the judge have been paraded out as well?) These appellate decisions often are made years after the original trials, and the defendant frequently is freed on bond in the meantime. The original jurors seldom are aware of the appeals. Witnesses die or move, and memories fade, which can make a meaningful second trial impossible. Defendants who once were found "guilty" by a conscientious jury may find themselves freed – and all too often, free to sue the state – based on such creative technicalities.

"Innocent" verdicts present another kind of problem. There is a rather universal law against "double jeopardy." This means that in a criminal case, if a defendant is found "not-guilty" then he or she may not be tried again for the same crime. This particular law is an essential feature of justice, as it keeps the state from retrying someone until a "guilty" verdict is obtained. In general, "not-guilty" verdicts cannot be appealed. However, it is possible in some states for a judge to declare a mistrial over the belief that the jury disregarded evidence. That may be quite appropriate if the judge feels that an irresponsible jury ignored the need for justice – even though it clearly circumvents the ban on double jeopardy. But it raises the question as to why the judge, alone, did not conduct the trial in the first place. Answer: The jury system is less about justice than about appearances.

A couple of other, even more commonly used means of justifying double jeopardy evolved over the last half of the 20th century. When victims and relatives are disappointed that a criminal

trial resulted in a "not-guilty" verdict, the exonerated defendant may then be sued for big monetary damages over the same alleged act – even if it has not been proven beyond a doubt that he or she committed it. This is because the law generally has a lower standard of proof for civil cases than for criminal cases. When authorities are similarly disappointed, they may pursue civil-rights charges in federal court – once again over the act for which the defendant was acquitted. Of greatest concern is that the latter is usually done out of political motivation. In both these mechanisms, the creative justification is that the defendant is being tried for an altogether different "crime," rather than twice for the same one. *Come again?*

One of the most-publicized cases of legalized double jeopardy involved the well-known football player, O. J. Simpson. It is not my intention to judge Simpson's innocence or character, or even to judge whether justice was or was not served by the way he was treated by the legal system. I'll leave all that to the reader. My point is solely about the questionable legal strategy the case involved, and the detrimental effects that the same strategy can have on innocent people. Simpson was accused of the murder of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman. He was acquitted in 1995 – apparently over a lack of evidence "beyond a reasonable doubt" that he committed the crime. In 1997 a civil court awarded a judgment of over $30 million against him for the "wrongful deaths" of the same victims. But this was not "double jeopardy"! Obviously, "wrongful death" is an entirely different crime than "murder." Well . . . it *is* spelled differently. And it also has an entirely different effect on the pocketbooks of the plaintiffs' attorneys. God knows whether or not Simpson had it coming. But it would be naïve to presume that divine justice is being served to everyone who gets treated this way by the legal system.

An equally famous instance of legalized double jeopardy – this time by the feds – involved Rodney G. King and some Los Angeles police officers. King was on parole for a previous robbery conviction. In 1991, allegedly under the substantial influence of alcohol, he led police on a high-speed chase that exceeded 100 mph. When officers eventually attempted to handcuff him, he become combative. Police tried a Taser, but this still did not subdue him. Numerous baton blows eventually followed, and were caught on videotape. The police were accused of using excessive force in arresting him. In 1992, four officers were tried for beating him. A jury acquitted three of the officers, but could not agree to a verdict on the fourth. Major riots ensued in Los Angeles. The situation was very politically charged because King was black, and the L.A. police have more than once been accused of mistreating blacks. L.A. Mayor Tom Bradley and President George H. W. Bush both expressed discomfort with the jury's verdict. But as I presume that neither of these public servants attended the trial or heard the evidence, it's a reasonable assumption that their discomfort was political. In 1993 the four officers were tried by the feds for civil rights violations. Two were acquitted, and the other two each were sentenced to 30 months in prison. Those convicted included Sergeant Stacey Koon, who had repeatedly intervened during the confrontation to get the other officers to restrain themselves. Koon was not even accused of striking King, but was held responsible for the actions of officers under his supervision that were considered inappropriate. As with Simpson, it is not my intent to judge either King or the officers. But it is understandable that jurors could assume various viewpoints of the incident. Some would feel that the police were just doing their jobs, and that King's combativeness warranted their actions. Others would feel that some of the force used was not justified. Nevertheless, this is another example of how the legal ban on double jeopardy may be circumvented – rightly or wrongly – if a verdict does not please the king and his nobles.

However – back to the original point regarding the merits of jury service: If a jury acquits someone of a crime, and if the same defendant is then sued or prosecuted for civil rights

violations over the same alleged act, then this diminishes even further the ability of a jury to make a meaningful and lasting mark on justice. This certainly is not to imply that juries are always right. For example, it is conceivable that better justice was rendered via the double jeopardy applied to Simpson and to the police officers in the King affair. Whether that is the case is anyone's personal opinion. Nevertheless, judges do tend to know what is expected, and they feel political and disciplinary pressures from higher-ups in the legal order. Juries tend to feel that they have *carte blanche* to administer whatever they feel is optimal justice, since they are well-shielded from personal repercussions. If their verdicts are close to those that the nobles would issue, then they'll probably stick. But if those verdicts upset the apple cart too much, there almost always are means within the system to get them effectively tossed out. And is the hassle of jury service worthwhile if it is only a rubber stamp?

A few other examples of juries not being told important facts, or of their verdicts being appealed because they were told too much:

- In 1999 two men won nearly $2 million from a motel chain over a claim that its lack of security resulted in their being shot and wounded in one of its parking lots. But one was a convicted felon; and the police found drugs, paraphernalia, and cash in the men's possession that made them believe that a drug deal had gone bad. The jury that awarded the judgment was not told of this evidence or suspicion of a drug deal, as it could have "biased" them. Had a judge tried the matter, he or she would have taken the whole picture into account. Does ignorance ever really make for better justice?
- In 2004 the US Supreme Court was considering an appeal of a death sentence, on the grounds that a defendant's being shackled during the trial might have made him look "dangerous" to the jury. Are we, then, to conclude that a defendant might ever be sentenced to die if he were not considered "dangerous"? And if he presents a danger to people in the courtroom, isn't it appropriate to restrain him?
- In July, 2011, FLDS polygamist sect leader Warren Jeffs was representing himself in a Texas trial. At one point, Jeffs indicated that he would read a statement that he had received from God. The jurors were paraded out of the room while he read it. Apparently, jurors are far too gullible to decide for themselves what is or isn't Godly wisdom. The judge, in contrast, must have been secure in her theological prowess, as she chose to remain in the room to hear it.

Perhaps cultural changes since the feudal ages have eliminated the original need for jury trials – at least in America. But still other cultural changes have made for intractable problems with the system. Jury verdicts sometimes are thrown out on appeal if the jury's ethnic composition is deemed too much of a mismatch with the ethnicity of the defendant. Also, the ethnic mix of jury pools is supposed to reflect the mix in the local community. That community mix generally is determined by census statistics, which are supposed to include even illegal aliens. However, there are a great many people who won't show up for jury duty. Many others are not qualified – either because they are non-citizens and are not eligible to vote, or because they do not speak fluent English. In some metropolitan areas of Texas, as an example, those who qualify for jury service and show up when summoned are of the more affluent socioeconomic ranks. This places lawyers and judges in tight spots. Selecting the best mix that they can of those who seem mainstream and intelligent enough to do a fair job, there still is a risk that jury mix can have an adverse effect on appeal. It matters little that the evidence presented in the case might clearly justify the verdict rendered.

"You never know what will happen if this case goes before a jury." This is advice all too often given by lawyers to their clients. Judges are much more predictable. They have a mandate to apply the law as written, even if some of them develop reputations for bending it. With juries, anything goes. One jury could hear a case, convict a defendant, and feel patriotic pride in taking the time to render this public service. Another jury could hear the very same case, find the defendant innocent, and feel similar patriotic pride. But let's face reality: *Random justice is not justice!* Open-and-shut cases almost always are decided appropriately, whether by a jury or by a judge. In cases in which either decision is entirely thinkable, a roll of dice likely would result in justice about as often as a jury trial. Acting without juries, judges would considerably improve these odds, even though they also are human and not perfect. They've heard many cases, and know all the ploys of defendants and their attorneys. And they are not paraded out of the courtroom when pertinent information is revealed.

Most criminal trials are relatively short, and sometimes are interesting. But they can drag on for months in the cases of wealthy or high-profile defendants. Civil cases, such as suits between corporations, usually are boring and can drag on for many months. Grand jury service is a secretive mechanism that lasts for months at a time. Federal jury duty, while less frequent than state duty, usually lasts for several weeks. In a significant number of trials, jurors are sequestered in hotels and may not be allowed to go home for weeks or months. Of course, this is to keep them from hearing things from the public that might bias them in hot-button cases. But rest assured that the judges are never sequestered. Jury duty disrupts the lives of countless citizens, their families, and their employers – but for *what?* Jury trials are slow, and the jury system costs more money – out of the pockets of the same taxpayers who are expected to serve as jurors. Single-judge courts or three-judge panels could conduct speedier trials and clear dockets much faster, and at much less expense. This, in turn, would tend to reduce court costs and attorney's fees for plaintiffs and defendants alike.

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A system of Direct Democracy, as proposed in chapter 21, is the real answer to empowering the American People – rather than the sham empowerment of jury service. Let the judges, alone, do the jobs we pay them to do; and spare the taxpayers the considerable inconvenience of providing political cover for the judges. Really bad decisions often would be corrected on appeal. And if the final outcome of an important case shocks the public conscience, the voters would have the opportunity to correct the matter. Of course, the Constitution must prohibit judges from sealing court records in attempt to prevent public scrutiny of their verdicts! In dealing with our public servants, the American People certainly should have the last word – rather than only the first. And this also would bring an end to control of the nation's legal system by the highly-compensated fraternal guild that currently has a monopoly.

Chapter 20

Build Your Own Amendment

Why the need for such a radical change as Direct Democracy? Couldn't Congress pass constitutional amendments to settle the really important issues, such as the ones raised in preceding chapters? Frankly, if they could, it would have happened long ago. But even with the ongoing raucous polarization between the two major parties, both sides are too heavily vested in the current system to have the spine to rock the boat.

Of course, if the People eventually are successful in a quest for Direct Democracy, the hot-button issues should demand first priority. Yet, there never is an end to the need for democracy. There are countless small and mid-sized issues that affect the lives of every American and the future of their country. But the current legal system and the threat of lawsuits makes it impossible for most of these ever to be resolved without constitutional amendments. Direct Democracy makes it much easier for every intractable issue – large or small – to be resolved, when needed, at the constitutional level.

What follows is a sampling of some everyday issues that might be addressed by the democratic processes recommended in the next chapter. They may inspire the reader to come up with pet issues of his or her own. Can you Build Your Own Amendment? Here are a few of mine:

- Speed bumps! No doubt there are legitimate needs for such things. *Somewhere.* But when rolling through the parking lots of apartment complexes and strip malls, there may be concern over potential damage to your vehicle's suspension – even at turtle-paced speeds. Common sense would say that it is not the responsibility of lot owners to prevent most accidents. That is, until an irate victim sues them for not making the lot "safe" enough. With Direct Democracy, the American People can demand even more of this kind of protection, limit it, or reduce it to zero. And, of course, shield lot owners from lawsuits for complying with the public's wishes.

- The feds keep tightening up emissions standards for new motor vehicles. Each increment raises vehicle costs, and can also decrease performance. These changes may be needed to bring down pollution levels in some metropolitan areas. A related government tactic is to require lower emission levels in annual inspections for vehicles that are based in these cities. But here's the real kicker: As all this squeeze is put on consumers, the government keeps "grandfathering" many older industrial complexes, on the theory that because they've been polluting since before many of us were born, they shouldn't have to quit now. Yet, in many areas the aggregate emissions from the big polluters exceed total vehicle emissions. Politicians would rather put the onus on consumers than force the big boys to clean up their acts. The public would do well to place some firm and final time limits on these "grandfathered" arrangements. Perhaps we should even demand a hold on further vehicle requirements until the industrial problems are fully handled. But it would seem appropriate that vehicle emission standards and inspections applying to metro areas should be required everywhere else as well. Why should Americans living in any area wait until pollution becomes a serious problem before assuming healthy practices?

- Why do many city busses have bright strobe lights on top, flashing continually even as they drive down the street? For safety, one would presume. But if so, then why aren't they required on the tops of all cars as well? Apparently it's harder to see a bus than to see a car! Can you imagine stopping at a light while strobes on all the cars in front of you are creating a fireworks spectacle? This trend toward stress-causing light pollution "illumines" an all-too-human trait. First, safety usually starts out deficient. When legitimate needs arise, they may be addressed appropriately. But over time, this usually causes needless irritation by going into overkill. The real reason? Simple. Engineers, managers, and politicians don't make their livings and legacies by saying, "We're currently doing enough. No further changes are required." But the American People should have the last word. We can require such lights on every vehicle, or we can demand their removal or limited use on others.
- American flag burning. Congress has toyed for years with an amendment to ban this, but is as stalled on this one as it is on everything else of importance. Personally, I'd support a ban of this practice in connection with public demonstrations – in part, to support our troops abroad. But I don't want to penalize kids and others who do some indignity to a flag – willingly or accidentally – either when in private, or with no public political intent. Any such amendment should be crafted carefully, so as to target only adults and teens who are engaging in flagrant public contempt.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act mandates that new or upgraded commercial buildings have ramps, elevators, enhanced restrooms, and the like, that are designed to be friendly to people with disabilities. That sounds great until one realizes that the Act did not apply to courthouses and other government buildings regularly accessed by the public. Handicapped protesters have made their points by crawling up courthouse steps. The affected jurisdictions would counter that they don't have the money to make the changes. But the feds don't allow that excuse for the private sector. Perhaps we need an amendment mandating that government apply most requirements to itself before applying them to others. After all, we can choose not to patronize a department store that does not well accommodate us. But we often have no choice over visiting government facilities.
- Handicapped parking spaces are wonderful things. They were a big help to me in dealing with my disabled mother in the years before her death at age 90. But balance is needed in all things. When circling and looking for a parking space at a large and crowded cinema complex, it's frustrating to see 40 handicapped spaces near the doors, without a single one of them in use. Maybe an amendment from the public will help bring balance to the Force!
- It's nice to be charitable. Donations from the wealthy have funded scholarships, fine arts institutions, and countless means of giving others a helping hand. Even many people of modest means enjoy helping out one or more of their favorite causes. But charity really is not charity when it's coerced, or is done for questionable reasons. Many big corporations support national charities by showing presentations to their employees and collecting their payroll-deduction cards. It's rather well-known that companies that can demonstrate that they are "contributing to the community" are more likely to land lucrative government contracts. Managers often feel that their careers are on the line if they fail to get virtually "100 percent employee participation" in their departments. Employees often feel that their careers – and especially their chances for promotion – are on the line if they

don't agree to pay at least some minimum percent expected. It's not that these affected people should be stingy. But perhaps they'd prefer to support the charities of their choices – their churches, a local homeless shelter, the Scouts, or an arts organization being examples. When coerced charity is ultimately tied back to government dealings, it not only is non-charity, but actually is a disguised, extra chunk of federal income tax. While it may be nice for employers to make charitable options available to employees, it should be unconstitutional for them to use payroll deductions, or otherwise to monitor their employees' giving. Let the corporations, themselves, make the donations if they wish to buy favoritism.

- Federal estate taxes are a serious but little-noticed threat to natural habitats. Heirs often are forced to sell plush land tracts that they would prefer to keep in their families, because the feds are demanding their cut. These usually end up becoming residential and business developments. A related factor is the ability of cities to incorporate and tax any adjacent land without the approval of the owners. Even worse, some cities have used eminent domain to force people to sell large tracts that they'd prefer to keep, just because the city wants the tax dollars and growth from having the property commercially developed. The People should debate these issues thoughtfully and demand the last word. And it also seems reasonable that the voters in a city should have to approve each specific use of eminent domain. If only the politicians want it, then it's not likely in the public interest.
- Protecting endangered and important plant and animal species is a responsibility of all citizens of Planet Earth. Yet, this laudable sentiment can be taken too far. In both rural and urban areas, cowbirds and similar common species have greatly reduced the numbers of songbirds and other desirable species from the balances that would occur in natural wilderness. Feral pigeons routinely cause blight in urban areas. It is human civilization, including farming, that has triggered the imbalances. Yet, both citizens and authorities often feel that their hands are tied – not because the offending species are endangered, but because fanatical animal rights activists and their lawyers would sue over attempts to euthanize any of them. Also, some protected species such as migrating egrets literally have forced people to leave their homes over seasonal filth and diseases. But even an attempt to capture and relocate them would be opposed by some. Perhaps the People should thoughtfully determine where the lines should be drawn, and mandate that officials comply with the public's decisions.
- Red-light cameras are a current matter of public debate. But a more subtle issue often escapes the public radar. Some cities have reduced the yellow-light signal time, and have hit the jackpot with increased red-light violations. A few other cities have increased the yellow-light time and have seen a significant decrease in accidents, as well as in camera violations. The American People should have the last word on both issues.
- To their credit, many cities and some states have outlawed smoking in restaurants and other public places. But problems are caused by lack of uniform regulations in all areas. When the largest city in my locality enacted a bold ban, a very nice 24-hour coffee shop on the city's perimeter soon went out of business. There were too many alternative hangouts in nearby suburbs that were happy to accommodate the addicts and gain business in the process. Fellow Americans – let's come from the 1950s into the holistic third millennium. I smoked very briefly when college age, partly as a way of rebelling

against my fundamentalist parents. But as I found more constructive ways to rebel, I left it behind as youthful indiscretion. Tobacco smoking is a very dirty habit, and one that contributes significantly to the nation's medical costs. Anything that Americans can do to clamp down in this area will be helping even those who currently balk.

- And then there are the issues of smoking, snorting, popping, or shooting anything else. Some political Progressives want the government to legalize and tax recreational drugs. They argue that pot is not addictive, so why ban it? But there are some of us folk – especially in Texas – who feel that any non-medicinal use of drugs is unhealthy escapism and a cultural liability. Also, many who develop an emotional dependence on pot will eventually gravitate to heavier stuff; and its proceeds fuel the larger drug trade. Of course, if the government does get into the drug business, the Democrats will compassionately use the extra revenue to provide more generous welfare. They'd much rather do that than balance the budget – or, for that matter, the lives of faltering citizens. But perhaps most important: Once the government acquires a new source of revenue, they'll have a vested interest in promoting it. Don't think for an instant that Big Brother will tax recreational drugs while trying to curtail their use. Some leftists who claim metaphysical affiliation have questioned my position, saying that I shouldn't pan something if I've not experienced it. So for the record – my token brush with Alice was several decades ago, courtesy of a friend who felt that it enhanced her exploration of the Inner Planes. Yes, I *did* inhale – and the buzz produced superficial hallucinations. Despite the fact that it allegedly was potent Hawaiian stuff, I really could not understand what she saw in it. It did not enhance my spiritual awareness one iota. But it was sort of a distraction from my usual, lucid mystical sensitivities until it wore off – similar to my observations about alcohol on the rare occasions when I imbibe. The preoccupation of some humans with ingesting chemicals is "fascinating," but this Vulcan finds the natural high of spiritual awareness to be far superior. It was slightly novel though: I got the munchies and had to stop at a late-night Whataburger on the way home.
- My long-time favorite grocery is the big, national pioneer in healthy supermarkets, that proudly calls Texas its home. But they've disappointed me in one way. Some years ago, many of its stores had racks in their lobbies containing numerous area holistic flyers. These promoted everything from yoga to psychic fairs to dentists who use non-metallic fillings – and not an ounce of sleaze. But at one point, perhaps in an attempt to appear "mainstream," the flyers were removed. The two main things that remained were the daily newspaper, and a free "alternative" weekly paper that distributes throughout the metroplex. The latter, catering largely to the secular Left, does have some merit. But for years, its classifieds have included many sleazy "massage" ads and similar things that are thinly veiled promotions of prostitution. Apparently, hookers present a more "mainstream" image than do yoga and meditation classes. Of course, I'd encourage this fine grocer to voluntarily add Spirit back into its holistic mission, along with Body and Mind. But as for the sleaze – it's not entirely the tabloid's fault. Greedy lawyers will sue for almost any client if their ads are rejected. With Direct Democracy, the American People can require periodicals to verify questionable ads, or reject them out of common sense. But in return, we would need to shield them utterly from lawsuit over their rejection of virtually any ad, for any reason. The merchants, of course, must be protected from lawsuit over selective display of "religious" materials – another possible reason that they eliminated metaphysical literature.

- Litigation has reached all the way to the Supreme Court over decisions by the National Endowment for the Arts not to fund art projects that it considers "indecent" or unworthy of public funding. Yet, its decisions to withhold funds came on the heels of public outcry over American tax dollars being spent to fund disrespectful and offbeat projects that would not even be displayed by most museums and galleries. Artists, of course, should be free to produce virtually anything of interest to benefactors and recipients. But the notion that the American People should fund practically anything is preposterous. Rejection by the NEA does not in any way amount to censorship. In my opinion, an amendment is needed to direct the NEA to fund only projects that it considers decent; that carry on the age-old artistic traditions of beauty, harmony, health, and respectful celebration of life; and that are of probable interest to the mainstream public. In any event, the agency has only so many tax dollars to spend. Therefore, it should be made absolutely impossible for anyone to sue over not getting a cut. Artists should make themselves and their creations worthy of NEA funding in the same way that they'd seek commissioning by anyone else.
- In other uses of tax dollars, many cities and states routinely offer special tax breaks to large corporations to build facilities in these areas. True, there are some economic benefits, including the creation of jobs. But with even one city or state doing this, the others must follow suit to compete – or risk losing jobs and revenue. The practice is much like corporations sending jobs overseas. If anyone does it, the others must also. Nevertheless, the effect is that many of the nation's well-heeled corporations pay much lower taxes than do private citizens and smaller businesses. The business giants have come to expect it. If one locality does not offer them a good-enough deal, then they'll look elsewhere. Sometimes the perks are even kept confidential, withheld from public scrutiny. Perhaps a better solution would be an amendment to ban all such special tax breaks outright, nationwide. This would level the playing field for all localities, and also get the corporate behemoths to pay their fair share. But while any such tax breaks still exist, the issuing jurisdictions should be required to post them conspicuously on the Internet.
- City politicians love to rename streets from time to time, all too often to curry favor with various political and economic interests. Of course, renaming almost any street causes inconvenience for residents; and sometimes it causes serious expense and loss of income for businesses that have widely promoted their street addresses. But there is salt rubbed into the wound if the new street name is not appealing to a majority of city residents. A reasonable requirement is that any name change for a city street requires an affirming vote of the citizens. While Direct Democracy is a national process, it permits the American People to delegate many well-selected powers to cities and states. Should these powers also apply to the names of stadiums and other buildings?
- Another power that might be delegated to cities is the ability to vote on the use of sirens by police vehicles. In some cities they are banned almost entirely, but this can raise ire when accidents occur during police chases. In others, the authorities use them *ad nauseam* for almost any police call. Let's give the citizens of these localities the final say over any siren use that is not mandated by state laws.
- Charitable and civic marathons and the like are the pet projects of local politicians. They often occur – bigger and better each year – without regard to disruption of the everyday activities of citizens. In 2002 a utility company in North Carolina was seriously impeded

in restoring power to residents after a storm, because of a major race that was occurring. On a Saturday morning in the early 1990s, I was headed into work to help with some special computer testing that had been scheduled in advance. Planning my trip with a few minutes to spare, I drove down an almost-empty toll road that is one of the city's major freeways. Just after I exited the toll section I arrived at a cross street, only to find that a walking marathon was headed across, and that I'd have to wait for a break. There was absolutely no way to go around. Optimistically, I kept waiting for someone to hold up a hand to halt the walkers and let freeway traffic through. But all in vain. I had to wait there for a full half-hour, only a few blocks from my destination, with my coworkers waiting – and not even a restroom had I required one. This was not a weekend parade on deserted downtown streets. It was a charitable event scheduled without regard to blocking one of the city's major arteries. An appropriate amendment would stop this kind of nonsense. Walking events should be required to let traffic through every couple of minutes at any cross street. And actual races should be held on tracks so as not to disrupt the public.

- Enjoy saying "hello" to your favorite checker at the supermarket or a big-box store? This tradition is threatened. Many large stores have adopted "Euro-style" checkout lines. All customers stand in one line, and the one in front proceeds to the next cashier available. Of course, this also keeps customers from avoiding a checker who is a klutz. Management will say that they are trying to serve customers better by keeping the lines moving. But this argument doesn't hold water. Customers are not stupid. If they're waiting in a longer line in lieu of a shorter one, it's usually because they want to. Checkers can and do announce, "I can take someone over here." But over the years I've filed two complaints about aggressive checkers who demanded that I switch to their lines, one even grabbing my hand basket. In America, freedom of choice is fundamental to our culture. Let's protect our tradition by banning "Euro" checkouts, and perhaps even by prohibiting large stores from allowing their checkers to target specific customers.
- Should corporate retailers be allowed to ask for unnecessary personal information at the cash register? A zip code is harmless enough, as they're just trying to figure out where to build another store. Virtually anything else is a violation of your privacy, and often is intended for use in direct marketing. Have you ever declined to give your phone number, only to have the cashier retort that they don't use it for advertising purposes? Even if that were technically true, rest assured that businesses don't go to the expense of collecting information that they don't expect to be used. Those discount cards that grocers offer are a deceptive variation on this theme. They hike up their "regular" prices, and then let people have a discount in return for subjecting themselves to direct marketing. But these programs cost the stores something to administer, so they actually result in higher prices for everyone. Direct Democracy can eliminate such cards and privacy violations, and level the playing field for all retailers. This will tend to reduce company costs, and thus bring down the prices for all concerned.
- And then, of course, there are those recorded store commercials. Enough said!
- Some years back the government issued very unpopular dollar coins. They've threatened to discontinue printing one-dollar bills. The only upside to the coins is that they gave postal stamp-vending machines a better way to give change. As for the downsides: First, they did not ask the American People what they want. And second, they did not provide the citizens with money bags to lug around all those new coins. Without Direct

Democracy, this situation is bound to get worse. Let's constitutionally mandate that any addition or discontinuation of a currency form requires a popular, national vote. If the citizens say "no" – then it won't happen.

- Do you remember when printed calendars had American national holidays marked conspicuously in red, and minor American holidays in black? I certainly do. It was easy to see at a glance when work and festive holidays were coming up. Nowadays, all brands of calendars that I know of show a hodgepodge of the official holidays of several nations, and the sacred days of several religions. Businesses and politicians have opted to include everything. It's understandable that they did not want to leave anyone out, because it's not their business to do so. It is the place of the American People to determine true American values and culture. Of course, there is a legitimate business need to keep track of the official holidays of neighboring countries. Solution: Constitutionally require that all commercially printed calendars sold in the United States either contain a list of holidays approved by the American voters; or, alternatively, be a "foreign holiday calendar" that excludes the American holidays.
- Most of us put up, happily enough, with the tone-dial phone menus that have long been in use by many large service companies. But some of them have been testing the limits of public patience. In addition to "Press One" and the like, some have been inviting the customer to say "Yes" or to respond verbally in more complex ways. Some have forced the verbal responses, not even offering keypad options that would have served just as well. After talking to one rep about business, I told her that I wished she'd pass on the information that I did not like being forced to speak to a machine. Her response was, "Oh, nobody likes doing that!" She was honest! I hope she did not get disciplined for it. But in any event, a few constitutional adjustments could improve the public's comfort by eliminating some of the most irritating phone procedures.
- On a similar note, when you have called a utility or credit card company about your account, have you suffered the irritation of having the rep keep you on the line while trying to sell you extra services? Their speal makes it hard to cut the conversation short without being rude, and they typically make you say "No" more than once. Then, the next time you call to check your balance, it's the same song and dance all over again. A reasonable requirement is that reps promote optional services only when the account is first opened, or if the customer asks about available options. Other promotions can be done via snail mail. After all, the US Postal Service needs the business.
- Depending on your locality, excessive and unnecessary use of "valet parking" may or may not be an issue. It certainly is a problem in the metroplex in which I live. Some restaurants with plenty of nearby parking will allow valets to block off large sections of spaces, so they can extract requisite tips from drivers who would happily have parked their own car. Worse, some restaurants with inadequate parking lots try to solve their problem with valets. Unseen to the customers, their vehicles often are parked in front of residences in nearby neighborhood streets. This places the vehicles at greater risk, and is a disservice to the neighbors as well. City councils need the empowerment to regulate use of valet parking, and to issue permits for situations in which the need is legitimate. But for this to happen, the Constitution must shield cities from any possibility of lawsuit by businesses or valet companies over the denial of a permit.

- Have you noticed that at some restaurants a waiter or waitress will take your glass away from the table, and out of your sight, while refilling it? Sometimes it's not even empty, and yet you have to do without it until they return. I've had them socialize with customers at another table, while holding my glass. Undoubtedly it's to save steps – a motivation also known as "laziness." But how do you know it was handled properly? And what about the dirty dishes from a neighboring table they carried along with it? Whatever happened to the venerable tradition of bringing a pitcher to the table? When that's not convenient they can bring you a new glass of your beverage, with fresh lemon and all the niceties – no shortcuts. Have other beefs with restaurants? This is your chance to Build Your Own Amendment!
- Around 1992 the federal government enacted a requirement to reduce the tank capacity of new toilets from a typical 3.5 gallons to barely even half that amount. In many areas, state and local laws and inspection requirements also mandate the new toilets. The theoretical purpose seemed laudable enough – to save water. But in practice, it's probably had the opposite effect. The new 1.6 gallon capacity is often not sufficient to get the job done. Therefore, a great many people flush more than once. Had a more sensible standard been adopted – perhaps 2.5 gallons – the change might have been almost invisible. But as we all know, rationality and politics exist in two very different universes. Some in Congress have since toyed with repealing the mandate. But business groups have opposed the repeal for one reason: With some state and local regulations now requiring the lower standard, manufacturers might be forced to produce different toilets for different areas of the country. Industry also has contributed to the decline in quality of the most essential facility in any home. Plumbers love to install the new floatless "flush valves," saying that they are modern, advanced technology. The truth is that they wholesale for less, so the plumbers make more profit. But in my experience, they never have functioned as well as the traditional float-driven "ballcocks." In any event . . . as we citizens are taught from childhood that in America we are the King on the Throne, we find that we are, instead, Political Potty-Pawns who aren't even consulted before changes affecting the most personal details of our lives. With Direct Democracy, we can score a Royal Flush by getting the American People back into the driver's seat.

By this time, perhaps you've come up with a few pet amendments of your own. With your speed-bump amendment drafted and ready to send to your Representative, it's time to proceed to the next chapter: a comprehensive plan for Direct Democracy in America.

Chapter 21

We the People

The intent of this national Direct Democracy proposal is similar, in many respects, to ballot initiatives in use today in some states such as California. Let the People vote directly on any issue that is important to them. There are some differences in the recommended processes, however, even aside from these being national votes instead of single-state. This chapter and the next one (on voting techniques) are rather technical, but only out of necessity. National Direct Democracy is very important to the nation's health and future, but is full of land mines if implemented poorly.

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State ballot initiatives generally happen when a petition is circulated and sufficient signatures are collected. Having given this point considerable thought, my proposal is, instead, that small coalitions of US Senators or Representatives launch such initiatives. We have elected our reps to do their jobs, and they do have considerable expertise. Therefore, it may be well not to try to do an end-run around them. In addition, any such new mechanism would have to be implemented by an amendment to the US Constitution. Congress would have to pass such an amendment, and it would have to be ratified by the state legislatures. Or a Constitutional Convention might be held – something that has not happened since the original Constitution was ratified. There is so much vested in keeping things just as they are that resistance to such an amendment will be considerable at first. But if at least some of our US and state reps feel that they have something to gain from it, such an amendment is more likely to be passed. In any event, if the ideas and desires of any citizen are popular enough to pass an eventual national majority vote, then the same ideas are bound to be attractive to at least a handful of Senators and Representatives.

The most important feature is that these initiatives, themselves, must be full-fledged amendments to the US Constitution and become part of it when passed. In other words, this is a new mechanism for passing a constitutional amendment by popular vote. If this were not the case, these initiatives would be almost worthless. They'd be another way to blow smoke and convince the People that they have a voice in their government. But any initiatives that really upset the status quo would quickly be overturned by the courts as unconstitutional, or even circumvented by further laws passed by Congress. In fact, Direct Democracy should be made the *only* means of amending the Constitution. Otherwise, Congress and the legislatures could use the traditional amendment process to overturn an amendment enacted by a majority of Americans.

Just how many congressional reps it would take to launch an amendment, and how often they could do it, are arbitrary factors. Wise choices for these parameters should balance effectiveness with practicality. My recommendation is that any five US Senators or any twenty House members be empowered to sponsor an amendment, and that each rep be limited to one amendment every four years. Reps might accrue their options beyond four years if unused. If every rep exercised his or her powers maximally, this would place, on average, about ten amendments per year before the American Voters. Many more than that might be overload, and some will advocate for even less. But any less will just choke off the effectiveness of the new mechanism. There are so many issues seriously needing to be addressed that the voters certainly will welcome the opportunity for this greater say in their country's affairs. Any who maintain

that the American People would not want this are certainly limited to the Suits in High Places. Because each rep would have only one "silver bullet" per four-year period, this should encourage use only for the most important issues.

It's noteworthy that the proposed arrangement empowers not only the American People, but any and all Members of Congress who are sincere in their desires to represent them. The only reps that it disempowers are those who claim to be the People's advocates, while actually having contempt for the popular will. The most serious resistance to this proposal certainly will come from the latter types – and this provides a very good gauge to identify them.

Another issue is what percentage of national votes must support an amendment before it will pass. Some will say "at least two thirds" – simply because they don't want this mechanism to be effective. The obvious choice is a simple majority of those voting. It's the most democratic option, and effectiveness requires something very close to this. My recommendation is 52 percent of those casting votes. Why? There are a few very-malleable swing voters. If any amendment that passed by a super-slim margin sets off hot feelings – as some inevitably will – there would be a flurry to sponsor a counter-amendment, and a big campaign to win over the swing votes. The recommended 52 percent would keep an amendment from passing without a two percent margin. And since a change of four percent would then be required to win a counter-vote, this would discourage quick re-votes, as they would have little chance of passage.

The initial constitutional amendment required to implement Direct Democracy would do well to add some structure to the Constitution. These are prime examples:

- Designate the current Constitution and its Amendments as the "Philosophical Constitution." It contains all those sweeping and lofty generalities that encourage federal judges to use their psychic abilities.
- Designate a new section as the "Statutory Constitution" in anticipation that national ballot initiatives will be far more detailed and specific. Instead of the vague principles that make up the current document, provisions added to this new section might include clauses like "For example . . ." so as to cause no ambiguity. A mandate that a type of shoe sold in America must be made in America, or in selected quality-minded countries, would be a typical example of the anticipated new amendments. Rather than being just a series of amendments inserted one after another, any verbiage in the Statutory section may be deleted or modified by subsequent amendments. Major sections and their sub-points should be numbered.
- Purely for practical convenience, a third document might be created which could be called a "Constitutional Decree." Physically, each such amendment would be a separate document, and would not have to be integrated into the Statutory section. A Decree could be used for something that is inherently time-limited, or that mandates a one-time action. Examples would be the renaming of a building, or provisions that expire on a fixed date or on someone's death. The sole reason for Decrees would be to keep from cluttering up the Statutory section with such matters.
- Firm stipulations that all sections of the Constitution carry equal weight, and that more-specific provisions invariably override less-specific ones. This would prevent the courts from claiming that a provision in the current Philosophical section is some kind of "senior principle" that overrides speed bump or anti-smoking provisions in the Statutory section.

It would be wonderful if it were all that simple. However, there are some real traps in what's been proposed so far – especially dangers from those who would want to corrupt or subvert such a system. One such danger is a "carrot-and-stick" amendment that tries to persuade the voters to give up their rights in exchange for unrelated benefits. Someone might offer the voters a 15 percent cut in income taxes for four years in exchange for suspending Direct Democracy amendments for three decades. The courts, of course, call this "extortion" when private citizens try to pull it off. A couple of additional problems are vague amendments with too many unanswered questions, and amendments that contradict existing ones so specifically as to create unresolvable constitutional conflicts. There also is the problem of conflicting amendments being proposed in the same election cycle by different coalitions of congressional reps. If the majority in Congress were left to police all this, a majority that disagreed with an amendment would do everything conceivable to declare it invalid. All this seems to indicate the need for an independent Amendment Review Commission (ARC). This might consist of five commissioners appointed by the governors of various states on a rotating basis. They could have a small, permanent legal staff to review proposed amendments and recommend actions. The ARC might or might not be a part of the National Archives, which is the keeper of the Constitution.

When a group of congressional reps propose an amendment it would be reviewed by the ARC, and could be rejected if it did not meet the following requirements:

- The amendment must have a clear, unifying intent that is specific to one general topic. For example, in a single amendment, banning red-light cameras and setting minimum yellow-light signal times probably would be okay. But throw flag burning or farm subsidies into the same amendment, and it would not. In any event, legitimate concerns that a specific amendment with more than one detail may have a carrot-and-stick effect could get it rejected.
- Any amendment that changes the mechanics of Direct Democracy – especially making the Constitution harder to amend relative to a specific topic – should contain only one specific point. Anything else is bound to have a carrot-and-stick effect. If the American People want to vote that amendments on some topic can be submitted only once every ten years, they should have the power to do so. But such an amendment should contain only the one provision.
- Amendments would be rejected if they lack sufficient details for unambiguous interpretation and application. If the same amendment, passed as a congressional statute, would be considered "unconstitutionally vague" by the courts, then it certainly would be too vague for the new Constitution.
- If a new amendment would conflict with existing constitutional verbiage in a way that cannot be resolved predictably by the "specific-over-general" principle, then it would be rejected. It could be resubmitted in a form that might amend the verbiage with which it conflicts.

The ARC should be empowered to reject an amendment only on very narrow grounds. It certainly should have no power to reject an amendment because of disagreement with its content or language. A proposed amendment could contain "packaging" language, as well as its verbiage. For example, the packaging could specify existing constitutional provisions that it is to replace or delete, by paragraph numbers. However, for any language to have the force of law after passage, it would actually have to be inserted into the Constitution.

The ARC might be faced with two conflicting amendments submitted in the same voting cycle. Both amendments might update the same existing paragraph, or they may compete with each other because of similar content. If the ARC believes that two or more amendments are competing, then the voters in the next election should have choices similar to these:

- Amendment A
- Amendment B
- Amendment C
- None of the above.

In the above example, there are serious problems if voters can check only one choice while ignoring the others. To fix this, voters must be able to "rank" their choices in order of preference. Vote ranking offers some great benefits for more than these constitutional amendments – specifically in elections of candidates to office. This is a substantial-enough subject that it will be dealt with in its entirety in the next chapter.

It should be the duty of the ARC to publicize an amendment widely as soon as it is submitted for review – by posting it on the Internet at a minimum. The ARC should have a maximum period of time – perhaps 90 days – to review a proposed amendment. If it does not explicitly reject the amendment in that time frame, then it should be considered accepted. Once accepted, the amendment should go to the voters in the next annual election cycle. An approved amendment might still be stopped if some of its required sponsors withdraw their sponsorship in time to keep it off the ballot. If an amendment is rejected or withdrawn, then all its sponsors should get their silver bullets back and be free to submit another.

The ARC may not be perfect. What if it rejects a legitimate amendment? What if it improperly declares, or fails to declare, an amendment to be in competition with others? Any of the sponsors might appeal the decision directly to the Supreme Court, who would be expected to rule within 90 days when it is in session. The High Court should have only the ability to uphold or overrule the decision, by the same criteria available to the ARC.

But oh, those checks and balances. American government has been all about these from the beginning. Perhaps the President should have a supply of "gold bullets" to use as follows:

- Empower a usual-sized coalition of congressional reps to sponsor an amendment without using up their silver bullets – limited to one amendment per year. The President might exceed that number by declaring that it is because of a national emergency.
- Act with reps, as above, to remove "dead" language from the Constitution that no longer has meaning, because the original circumstances have irreversibly changed. For example, if provisions apply to a building or organization that has gone out of existence, it would be time to do a housecleaning. In this one case, such an amendment might be permitted to apply to any number of unrelated "dead" issues. But the ARC should reject such a "dead-language" cleanup it if it feels that any part of it is still potentially meaningful. As always, it would have to be publicized and voted on by the People.
- Ask the Supreme Court to review an amendment that has been approved by the ARC. The High Court would have the power to reject the amendment only by the same criteria available to the ARC.
- Delay the national vote on an amendment for one election cycle, one time only per amendment. This might be done if there is concern that the amendment has not received

adequate publicity, or if the President wants more time to make a case that the amendment will be harmful.

While reasonable checks and balances are prudent, it must be clear that no means will exist to delay, indefinitely, the vote on a properly constructed amendment. If in a one-year extension, the President cannot convince the American People that an amendment is a bad idea – then it isn't!

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To avoid corruption, misuse, or circumvention, the initial amendment implementing Direct Democracy should specify certain points absolutely beyond question:

- Popular vote is henceforth the sole means of amending the Constitution. Any amendments already passed by Congress, but not yet ratified by the states, are cancelled.
- No part of the Constitution is un-amendable by the due processes specified for amendment, and no provision may be barred from the Constitution because of its content. — Every conceivable special interest will fight this one. But if even a single issue is taken out of the hands of the American People, it is a corruption of democracy. And it inescapably will come to threaten the continued viability and security of the nation, at some point in its future.
- The United States Constitution is the highest and unmitigated law affecting the nation. When in conflict it absolutely and immediately overrides court rulings, presidential and other administrative orders, contracts, treaties, international agreements, and international law, in their effects on the United States.
- The United States is not authorized to enact treaties or agreements with other nations, with any guarantee that these will not be abrogated later by popular American vote. When an agreement is so-abrogated, the responsibility of the United States is to inform the affected parties that it is no longer in effect. The United States is not authorized to agree to, or permit, any punitive action against itself or its citizens because of such an abrogation.
- No party may sue the United States or any of its citizens or businesses as a result of a constitutional amendment or its effects. If the Congress believes that damages are warranted, it can submit them, as an amendment, to the American People for popular vote.
- To the degree that the provisions of the Constitution are specific and clear enough so as not to raise reasonable legal questions, no court or other agency has the authority to ignore or set aside these provisions – even in the interest of fairness or conscience, or to protect life, limb, or financial interest. It is a federal felony for anyone acting in governmental office knowingly to set aside clear constitutional provisions. Any official unwilling to carry out constitutional mandates is expected to resign from office immediately.
- Constitutional amendments can mandate anything. But by way of example, they may remove any official or employee in government from office, whether administrative, congressional, or judicial; and they can bar individuals from running for or holding office.
- Neither the President, the Congress, nor the courts may suspend any clear and specific

part of the Constitution – even in times of war or national emergency – other than in accord with explicit emergency criteria that may be added to the Constitution, from time to time, by popular vote.

- ❖ No party may sue to stop a proposed amendment from being voted on or from going into effect; nor may any party sue an individual or organization for promoting a desired amendment. The power to review an amendment is delegated solely to the ARC and the Supreme Court, who may not be sued over such decisions. No court, however – including the Supreme Court – may rule, after an amendment's passage, that it did not meet the required criteria, and thereby invalidate it. Only the People can revoke it.
- ❖ Lawyers and corporations filing suit in violation of the Constitution, or with the intent of impeding the implementation of its clear provisions, are guilty of a criminal offense. Civil courts must refer such suspected cases to prosecutors. A lawyer with three separate convictions of acting against the Constitution must be barred for life from working in the legal field. Defendants in such frivolous suits are entitled to punitive damages. Judges who allow such cases to go forward – in the absence of reasonable legal question – are similarly guilty of a criminal offense.

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Wow! Kind of heavy. But if the American People really are serious about taking their streets back and having true democracy, some tough, new terms of engagement are required. Otherwise, democracy will continue to be only a bad joke and a tool for more corruption. The greatest barrier to American Direct Democracy, however, is neither technical, legal, nor political. In fact, it's a most-profound spiritual issue, rooted very deeply in the heart of the Trance, and existing since close to the Beginning of Time. To overcome it requires true, collective Awakening. Okay, are you ready? *Here it is:* It's a deeply programmed reaction, with a feeling of uncertainty and even unworthiness, emanating from the gut – along with the forlorn conviction that hell will most assuredly freeze over before the politicians will allow even one whit of this to occur!

Now honestly . . . is that an appropriate attitude for a civilization of awakening infinite and immortal beings? It's time for a very important and practical observation about true spiritual development. With our heads in the clouds, as during the spiritual space tour, it's easy to focus on the light, airy, and fun side of our spiritual roots. But when we try to bring our native spiritual wisdom, and the very being of our Higher Selves, down through the demon-infested astral plane and into the physical world, major cosmic alarms go off. The Dragon invariably raises his menacing head, and the threat of his noxious breath can cause many to back down. Yet, it's often in times of profound crisis and necessity that collective Spirit again shows it true colors and slays the Dragon.

In attempt to belittle Direct Democracy, there will be those who falsely claim that it somehow would create an unfair "tyranny of the majority." I've heard that one from a lawyer's mouth. Yet, it could not be further from the truth. In a kind of irony, even a polarized electorate can bring the nation to the Center on issues, through the processes of Direct Democracy. For example, it's likely that liberals and centrists would join forces to keep elective abortion legal for women. But it's just as likely that centrists and conservatives would unite to mandate parental notification, in most cases, for a minor seeking an abortion. Politicians are not the only ones who are polarized into two extremist camps. Much of the public is similarly polarized – less because they've rationally sorted out their convictions than because all their close friends are also "liberals" or "conservatives." Intellectual stimulation and increased spiritual awareness

encourages more independent thinking, and tends to help people balance themselves. If there were a much stronger center-spectrum political culture established in America, it would propagate itself, as it would be easier for citizens of this mindset to find friends and supporters. The demons, so far, have done their best to suppress the Center, as it is their greatest threat.

Majority rule is the only legitimate definition of democracy that has ever existed. A majority vote on a specific issue is a triumph for democracy on that issue. The Founders knew that their system of democracy would not always please everyone – including themselves. But they had the wisdom to know that its results are far-superior to a monarchy or dictatorship. And it should be noted that a majority vote may not prove to be the right one for all of eternity. Someone with a minority opinion may have some very good ideas that can become popular in the future. Direct Democracy would tend to take much of the rancor out of politics. The current norm is for activists to have nasty fights with their opposites. The gays and the fundamentalists are still duking it out. But once Direct Democracy is in place for some time, more citizens will realize that good ideas can be promoted most effectively with public relations campaigns and diplomacy. Heated elections to pick another polarized politician will become far less effective. More of our representatives are likely to be selected for their intellect, diplomacy, and statesmanship, rather than for extremist ideology.

Some might claim that Direct Democracy would turn an elegant Constitution into an unintelligible hodgepodge that would be a nightmare for anyone to understand. However, this is just obstruction and carping, as the exact opposite is true, in practice. Congress and state legislatures enact a hodgepodge of statutes regularly, as it is their job to do so. Congress still would be crafting the amendments under Direct Democracy, but these would go into a different document. The existing Constitution – even though it may *sound* lofty and elegant – is the source of even more confusion. It is so vague that the courts can read anything into it. And in subsequent years, they can read just the opposite. This can cause laws to be thrown out as unconstitutional, regardless of how long they've been in effect without being questioned. In truth, neither the American public nor the most distinguished law professor can read the nation's Constitution and laws, and determine conclusively what the law actually says. That's why lawyers have tome after tome of case law in their libraries – so that they can make at least an educated guess as to what might convince a court. Constitutional amendments of the proposed sort will bring far more clarity to American law than it has had in recent memory.

There are some who worry that the American voters might not be wise enough to do a good job of self-governance. With Direct Democracy implemented, some would worry that naïve and emotional votes could quickly drive America over the edge. I'd counter that all true values come ultimately from emotion, and not from logic; although logic can help clarify emotion-based conclusions and transform them into wisdom. Of course, when people enjoy freedom – individual or collective – whether they use that freedom wisely or stupidly is up to them. Thus, life has no guarantees of success. But my argument against these concerns is very simple: In the current state of plutocracy and sham democracy, America is already headed straight for the cliff's edge at full speed. And without a radical change of course, the nation will plunge over it far sooner than most citizens currently realize. Direct Democracy is about the only reasonable thing that has not been tried. If we implement it in time, this mighty nation has a chance of returning to glory and rising to her next rightful destiny. If we continue as we are, then unspeakable disaster in the relatively near future is absolutely guaranteed. So since America has its future to gain and nothing to lose, it would seem prudent to go for it – ASAP!

It is wholly understandable and to be expected that many will be skeptical, at first, regarding

national Direct Democracy, as it's not a topic that has received much debate at this writing. However, it is my hope that when the dust settles, many citizens will perceive it as the best choice – and even a vital one. In the long run, anyone who opposes Direct Democracy just does not want the American People to govern themselves – a position that might appropriately be characterized as "treason." Politicians will balk the most. But once some incumbents are ousted by Direct Democracy candidates, the rest will start to pay attention. Of course, America is not the only Western nation with a frustrated populace. The people in many others would like this kind of freedom as well. Therefore, it should be a high second priority to encourage other nations to take similar steps – even to the disdain of their plutocratic leadership.

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There will be a bit more on these subjects in the final chapter. However, before going there it is needful to take a look at one more technical issue. Modest reform of the voting system – in ways already being proposed by others – is needed in conjunction with Direct Democracy, and offers some other important benefits to the American People.

Chapter 22

Making Your Vote Count

It was noted in the last chapter that a system of ranking vote choices would be needed when competing amendments are on the ballot in a Direct Democracy system. Ranking also has benefits in electing candidates to office. In this chapter we'll take a look at each of these two issues, in turn.

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If a single constitutional amendment is offered to the voters with no competing amendments, then all that is required on the ballot is a simple "yes/no" choice. If the required proportion of those casting ballots vote "yes" – 52 percent having been my recommendation – then the amendment becomes part of the Constitution.

It also has occurred to me that for fun, a third, Texas-style, "Hell No!" choice could be included. A "Hell No!" vote would count the same as a "no" vote. But these could be tallied separately, and would be a good way to razz a politician for wasting a silver bullet on an unpopular amendment. Not that this option is vital to Direct Democracy, but it's mentioned for due consideration.

Back to the serious side – what about competing amendments? Amendment "A" bans smoking in restaurants and in their patios. Amendment "B" bans smoking in the dining rooms, but not on the patios. After some California Representatives submitted amendment "A" then some tobacco-state Senators submitted "B" so that it did not have to be all-or-nothing. The Amendment Review Commission (ARC) properly flagged these as competing amendments. On the ballot, voters might see something like:

- Amendment A – Bans smoking in restaurants and in their patios
- Amendment B – Bans smoking in indoor restaurant dining rooms
- Neither of the above

If normal plurality voting techniques are used, a voter could pick only one of these choices. But consider this outcome:

- Amendment A – 32%
- Amendment B – 28%
- Neither of the above – 40%

No smoking ban at all appears to be the most popular choice, at 40 percent. But in fact, 60 percent of voters clearly opted to ban smoking in restaurant dining rooms. They were divided only over the patios. Normal vote counting also presents another problem. Even if the numbers were reversed in order – with amendment "A" getting 40 percent as the most popular – it still would not pass, because it did not meet the required threshold of 52 percent (or even a simple majority). Clearly, a different means of voting and tallying is required to handle this situation appropriately.

The best option that comes to mind is a variant of those polls on many websites in which visitors are asked to rate a picture, restaurant, or social group by giving it from one to five stars.

The main difference is that, in the case of competing amendments, it is necessary to get a "for" or "against" count for each one, in addition to seeing which amendment is the most popular. Conceptually, such a ballot option might look something like this:

- Amendment A – [awful] [very bad] [bad] (good) (very good) (excellent)
- Amendment B – [awful] [very bad] [bad] (good) (very good) (excellent)

The six choices, from left to right, would be scored from "0" to "5" respectively. The higher the total score that an amendment receives, the more popular it is. Also, the options in brackets indicate opposition to the amendment, while those in parentheses indicate support. For an amendment to pass, 52 percent of those voting would have to give it a positive rating. If more than one gets the requisite positive approval rating, the one of those that has the highest score would pass. Note that the rating score is affected not only by those that approve of the amendment, but also by those that oppose it. Therefore, the ratings by all voters would play a part in choosing between multiple amendments. Opponents would be able to indicate a preference for the "least of the evils" by a moderate vote against it. In the extremely unlikely case of an exact numeric tie between the most popular choices, the Senate could be required to break the tie during its next session and select any one of the tying, most-popular alternatives.

A variation I favor, that is a bit more like Internet voting, would look like this:

- Amendment A – ★★★★☆
- Amendment B – ★★★★★
- Neither of the above – ★☆☆☆☆

In this case, if the "52 percent rule" – or even a simple 50 percent majority rule – needs to apply for passage, then at least the required percentage of those voting would have to rate the amendment higher than "Neither of the above" for an amendment to be further considered. Of those amendments that pass this first test, then the one with the highest numeric rating would be enacted.

Readers and scholars may debate the best of the two formats shown. One consideration may be the ability of existing voting machines to be programmed to support either of these formats. Internet-style voting such as this is called "range voting" because it gives a voter a "range" of values to choose from, rather than just a "yes/no" approval. In a variation of either of the above two formats, it would be possible to offer only two choices per item – essentially "approve/disapprove." The latter is called "approval voting." The main problem with approval voting is that it tends to favor passage of "moderate" or "compromise" choices at the expense of more radical ones, regardless of how popular the more radical choice may be. For example, it might get the smoking ban passed for restaurant dining rooms only, even if the ban that includes the patios is much more popular. If 70 percent of American voters prefer the more sweeping ban as their first choice, then the other 30 percent should not be able to derail it. That 30 percent, of course, are fellow human beings and deserve some respect. But when a nation's political system thwarts democracy in favor of special interests, it treads down a very dark path, indeed. Range voting handles the popularity issue much better, and therefore helps safeguard democracy.

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Completely aside from Direct Democracy and competing constitutional amendments, there are severe problems in electing candidates under the current plurality voting system – in both primary and general elections. Plurality, of course, is a system in which voters can select only

one of the candidates that are on the ballot, rather than indicate any further order of preference. The main problems are summarized as follows:

- A third-party candidate – or any less-popular candidate in a primary – can siphon off votes from the most popular runner, throwing the election to a candidate that is not the public's first choice.
- In trying to avoid the above, voters are afraid of "wasting" their votes on a third-party candidate, no matter how strongly they may prefer him or her. Therefore, many will vote for a Democrat or a Republican in a general election, even if their conscience dictates otherwise. The overall effects of this are to empower the very polarized two-party system; and to keep moderate and centrist candidates from getting elected, regardless of their personal merit and popularity.

The "electoral college" system for the presidency also exacerbates some of these problems, and is inherently undemocratic. It gives the voters in some states more power than the voters in others. There also is the possibility – however remote – of corruption at a crucial political cusp. If the People's first choice for President were perceived by those in high places to constitute an exceptionally high threat to Washington's "business as usual," then it is possible that electors might subvert the process and pick a more "mainstream" candidate. They apparently have no criminal or civil culpability for doing so. And even a lawsuit to get the election annulled would be a long, uphill battle with uncertain results. The plurality-vote issue, however, is the more important problem, and can be made graphic by looking at some recent election results.

Billionaire Ross Perot ran for the presidency in 1992 and 1996. In the first run he won nearly 20 percent of the popular vote – very impressive for an independent candidate. In the second, as a candidate of the Reform Party which he founded, he won about 8 percent. One of the problems in his second run was some indecision about whether he was going to pursue it until the last minute. But his basic message – and that of the Reform Party – was a very popular one. It was breaking the malignant stranglehold of international free trade agreements supported by the plutocracy, and bringing American jobs back home to Americans. Perhaps the recession of 2007 and the job-market problems that followed are enough to make Americans realize that Perot and Reform were 100 percent on-track with their message. A big difficulty, though, is getting any third-party candidate elected under the current system, even if he or she is extremely popular. Especially because the Dems and the GOP are so polarized, a great majority of voters have a very strong preference between presidential candidates nominated by these two giants. But they are so concerned that a vote for any third-party candidate will be wasted – throwing the election to the "wrong" one of the plutocratic titans – that they often will choose to vote for the "right" one instead of their third-party dream candidate. The titans, of course, love the arrangement, which is exactly why it's persisted. Perot easily was a victim of the plurality election system, as he might have been elected had people been less afraid of wasting their votes. As he won no electoral votes he did not "throw" the election, despite his impressive numbers. But in the next election a much less-popular candidate, who had little chance of winning, managed to upset the applecart.

In 2000, Green Party candidate Ralph Nader won only about 3 percent of the popular presidential vote. Yet, because of his effects in some closely divided states, he won electoral votes. George W. Bush beat Al Gore in that election for three reasons:

- The very existence of the electoral system, as Gore won the popular vote.

- A controversial Supreme Court decision over a very close tally in Florida.
- Ralph Nader, and his "spoiler" effects under the plurality system.

Al Gore "should" have won – and would have won – in 2000, had a truly democratic system been in place!

I make that last statement in a bit of irony, and want to inject a few spiritual observations into these mundane discussions of elections. While being non-partisan and independent, I personally rooted for Bush in both of his elections. Even while disagreeing with him and with the Republican Party on many points, I felt that eight years of Clinton-ism was enough, and that Bush was the best choice for that point in time. Spirit has a way of manifesting whatever is truly in public consciousness at deep levels. And it tends to circumvent even human election systems, as it apparently did in this one. The Hermetic pendulum of politics swings hard as public spirit progresses on its winding path. It landed Bush a decisive and legitimate win in 2004, and got Barack Hussein Obama elected in 2008 and 2012. Life goes on! As humans, we can and should work diligently to build the fairest and most democratic systems possible. But even under those, the pendulum will swing. And whatever is in our collective subconscious ultimately will come to the surface. Only spiritual development will improve these outcomes. Alas. But back again to the material world!

The foregoing examples dealt with general elections. However, plurality votes are a problem in primaries as well. In one-party primaries – Republican, Democratic, or whoever – the party members have a right to hold onto plurality voting if they wish, and to decide whether it suits their purposes. Unfortunately, both those purposes and the effects of plurality voting usually are to nominate very polarized and extremist candidates who epitomize the party's "ideology." Why else are the American people, in a general election, often asked to choose between a fundamentalist plutocrat and a liberal socialist plutocrat – both of whom are confirmed Washington insiders? If the parties, themselves, would let their grassroots membership really vote their consciences, more moderate and centered candidates might be nominated. But in states that hold a single, open primary – for Republicans, Democrats, and riff-raff alike – the effects of plurality voting can be dramatic.

The top three contenders in the 1991 Louisiana race for Governor were former Governor Buddy Roemer (Republican), former Governor Edwin Edwards (Democrat), and State Representative David Duke (Republican). They were butting heads in Louisiana's combined primary. Roemer was the least controversial. Edwards had long been in hot water over various allegations of corruption. In support of those perceptions, he was sentenced to prison in 2001 for felony racketeering. Duke was an ex-Klansman who has since claimed mainstream Republican affiliation. In 2002, Duke was found guilty of felony mail fraud and tax charges, largely over conning money out of many far-Right admirers and sympathizers. Roemer was the most "centered" candidate. He once had been a Democrat, and later became a Republican as a matter of political strategy. This did not appear to be over any major change in ideology. Edwards was solidly to the Left, and Duke to the far Right. In the primary, about one voter in four picked Roemer. The top two winners were Edwards and Duke, with over 30 percent each, and Edwards slightly ahead of Duke. This resulted in a runoff between Edwards and Duke, in which around three fifths of the voters handily elected Edwards. In this particular election, of course, committed Democrats might feel that things worked out just fine. But let's get out the magnifying glass and use some logic. Had the runoff been between Roemer and Duke, virtually any liberal or Democrat would have voted for Roemer. This means that, while Duke enjoyed some popularity, he really never stood a chance against either of these other two contenders.

Even if popular, he was the least popular. On the other hand, it seems reasonable that if the runoff had been between Edwards and Roemer, virtually all of Duke's supporters would have voted for Roemer, as he was more conservative than Edwards, as well as being less controversial. Buddy Roemer was the most popular candidate by a significant margin – but he got ousted due to the plurality voting system.

I'd closely watched all these specific elections, and had been digesting their results for several years. Much of it was over the perception that Perot and Reform represented medicine that America sorely needed – and *still* needs. I contemplated what went wrong, and what might be needed in the future to get things back on track. The Louisiana election had gotten my attention, initially, out of amusement over the controversial gyrations of David Duke. But they all pointed to many of the same problems. As I mentioned in chapter 13, the Reform Party might have done better if it had added Direct Democracy to its bring-the-jobs-home platform. But it's doubtful that it could have won at the time, even then, due to the chokehold that the two-party-dominated plurality system has on the American electorate.

The one thing that became clear is that Americans need a good means of ranking their candidate choices in order of preference. A good side benefit of such systems is elimination of the hassle and expense of runoff elections, in all cases except for exact numeric ties. I had envisioned that ballots should permit voters to pick their first, second, and third choices, and so forth. It then became apparent that picking a scoring algorithm for such ranked votes was not a trivial issue. I had more or less settled on a scoring method called "instant runoff voting" that sometimes is used in committees. Then the revelation came that I had the right string, but the wrong yo-yo!

The epiphany came when I discovered William Poundstone's book, *Gaming the Vote*.[1] Poundstone cites anomalies from the aforementioned and other elections; demonstrates how every conceivable scoring method for numerically ranked votes is seriously flawed; and then makes an excellent case that Internet-style range voting is by far the best bet. His book is somewhat technical, but also is a good read that is full of political intrigue and chicanery. Anyone interested in the subject should read the mentioned work.

It took only a little extrapolation to determine that a variation of range voting is needed to rate competing amendments in a Direct Democracy system. The method I discussed earlier is a blend of range voting and approval voting. In candidate elections, there is no "none of the above" choice. With competing amendments, the range-voting technique lets a voter indicate an order of preference. The approval-voting aspect lets voters choose "none of the above" and ensures that an amendment will pass only if it has 52 percent (or at least majority) voter approval.

In elections for public office, the ability of a voter to rate more than one runner boosts the chances of independent and third-party candidates achieving success, if they truly are popular. It promotes balance and centrism, and can reduce the effects of major-party polarization. It also can help smaller parties achieve significance by qualifying for federal funds. In the 2000 election, Ralph Nader never expected to be elected President. He hoped to attract 5 percent of the voters, so that the Green Party would qualify for federal funds in the next election. By eliminating the fear of wasted votes, the chances of a third party achieving more prominence are greatly enhanced. If Reform had benefitted from this in 1996, there is a chance that America, today, would not be reeling from such a severe loss of jobs for its citizens, even if a recession had occurred when it did. Voter ratings of all available choices bolster true democracy as almost nothing else can. And it significantly reduces the clout of big money – which is exactly why the

[1]. William Poundstone, *Gaming the Vote* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008).

plutocratic establishment will throw every shameless tantrum conceivable to keep it from becoming reality.

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Americans are mesmerized by patriotic teachings as they grow up. The relative prosperity in which this nation has been coasting – until recently – has inflated American egos, and has kept many citizens convinced that the current system must be working in their interests. How very close to the edge of ruin humans often have to come before they wake up and smell the coffee! Perhaps this tour of Armageddon on Earth will convince many that balance never will be brought to the Force so long as the current emperor remains in control.

Chapter 23

Reading Washington's Cards

The last comparable period in the Earth's history was America's Revolutionary War and Independence. The Colonists had been forming a new society in which spiritual freedom could blossom, and in which the leading edge of Earth's evolving culture could rise to its next level. Naturally, the Dragon was stirring in increasing fury, with the intent to squelch these developments. And as wonderful friends as the British are today, their leadership at the time was squarely in the employ of the Dragon – at least in its dealings with America. The Colonists had become serfs. They lacked any say in Britain's government. But they were taxed; and were expected, by the sweat of their brows, to benefit the British elite back home. The American Revolution was no glorious fight in some hayfield with banners waving. The Colonists knew from the outset that it would not be. While America won the war and slayed the Dragon of the times, it was very costly in terms of life and limb for both sides. Yet it was justified, so that the cutting-edge culture of Earth could fulfill its rightful destiny. Spiritual and human freedom to form the highest-quality cultures possible is the ultimate in universal morality. Any attack on that freedom is the ultimate evil. In principle, there is nothing that is morally unjustified in fighting that ultimate evil. It has justified bloody war more than once – and war is the mass-killing of fellow human beings. In practice, all actions in important causes are justified solely by their effectiveness, or unjustified by their lack of it.

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The Apocalyptic processes that have been occurring subtly in the Earth's consciousness for some centuries have brought America – and the Western world along with it – to a new cusp. Our rightful, higher destiny is a spiritual awakening not known since almost the dawn of Time. Our potential is a spiritually enlightened and holistic civilization in which the malignancies of the astral plane can be cleared up, and in which the Higher Sun of our spiritual roots can shine directly into the world of human affairs. The softening-up of fundamentalist attitudes and the growth of tolerance and pragmatism have led us to this important cusp. But at no surprise, the Dragon has reared his head in his most menacing stance ever seen on Planet Earth. He still is manifest in pockets of fundamentalist intolerance, but these are a dying breed in the West. He presents a far greater threat through the forces of globalism. These come primarily from two places: the international, economic Right; and a cesspool of imbalanced, liberal extremism that has tended to throw family values, self-discipline, respect for authority, and general human decency out the door. The latter was probably a needed reaction to repressive and mindless fundamentalism, at the outset. But as happens all too often, the pendulum went right through its optimal point and onward to its opposite pole. Noting the arrival of the West at this cusp – and acknowledging the practical evils of globalism at this point in history – constitutes no ill will toward any groups of spiritual beings. But it does and should constitute some tough love. The cultures of planet Earth are not nearly at the same levels of consciousness. Spiritually, we are One. But humanly, Earth's cultures today are as contrasting as day and night; and some of them are headed squarely in anti-evolutionary directions. Their best salvation is isolation and self-destruction, eventually to incarnate into Anglo-European-style Western culture. And until the West has evolved, securely, into its new destiny, it cannot continue to take on the pains and

problems of cultures that are not yet ready for that destiny. For example, there may be a time and place for the West to wage war against a Third World dictator who actively threatens Western interests. But the high costs of recent wars suggest that it is foolish, and even self-defeating, for America to try to be the world's cop, and to slay dragons for everyone else. Spending American dollars to help other countries rebuild also must stop. If it takes that type of "compassion" to justify a war, then the war is not likely justified. The resolve to stay out of others' affairs, when possible, would suit the West very well. When we have finished removing the logs from our own eyes, then we can see clearly to remove the specks from the eyes of our brothers.

A world government based on a global plutocracy would be the ultimate tool of the Dragon in suppressing spiritual awakening, and in preventing America and the West from achieving their rightful Apocalyptic destiny. There is no such government as yet; but existing institutions with similar clout have much of the same effect. The International Monetary Fund wields global financial clout that threatens even American independence. The International Criminal Court does not answer to the voters of any sovereign state; but threatens to impose arbitrary globalist values on every nation on Earth. The United Nations seemed to have a noble purpose at its inception. But today it is more of a hindrance to Western interests than a help. Of course, it is healthy for America to maintain the best relations possible with every country on the planet. But it is misguided to treat nations as our peers when their actions and cultures are not harmonious with our own best interests. When every sovereign nation is treated as if it has equal authority over the West, this renders the West essentially unable to defend its values. When America wants consensus in economic sanctions, or in military actions against another country, the best states to consult as a group are our NATO allies. The United States would do well to withdraw its support from all of the mentioned globalist organizations, and to encourage other Western nations to do so as well.

Immigration is another hot-button globalist issue. Immigration originally served our young nation well for a single reason: The preponderance of the early immigrants were well-educated, distinctly Western, unified in European ideology, and very personal-responsibility minded. They did not come here to sue the American government or the country's citizens. They manifested the kind of rugged independence that gave the evolving nation two centuries of greatness. It is humanly understandable that all people on Earth will act to better themselves as they see fit. Nevertheless, on preponderance, the effects of immigration on Western culture today are dead weight, rather than any kind of asset. Europeans and their leaders are realizing this quite painfully, over the riots and crime that have been emanating from their Third World slums. America cannot continue to be a safety valve to rescue all desperate people on Earth from the shortcomings of their own cultures. Until the American People are in a position to regulate the details of immigration in a fully democratic fashion, we would do very well to demand a virtual halt to all new immigration and the granting of US citizenship. Simply learning to speak English, and a little knowledge of American history, does not constitute assimilation. But if we keep welcoming more warm bodies without true assimilation, America will become just another Third-World country; and our rightful destiny will be obliterated forever. Very pointedly – that result would even make Direct Democracy a moot point.

Another practice that flies in the face of personal responsibility is America's overly generous welfare programs. They have assumed their present character, neither because they fit the nation's budget, nor because they do an optimal job of rehabilitating faltering citizens. Unfortunately, these programs have evolved with one priority in mind: politicians who are clamoring after votes by kowtowing to vocal special interests. For a telling analysis of this

subject, see *The Tragedy of American Compassion* by Marvin Olasky.[1]

Nevertheless, it is neither other world cultures, nor even the plutocrats here at home, who bear the ultimate responsibility for America's current crisis and the nation's several decades of decline. When the fore-finger points, the thumb always points back at the accuser. Since a point of healthy stability in 1950, Americans have become too fat, lazy, unfocused, undisciplined, entitlement-minded, ignorant of true civic affairs, possessed of the herd consciousness of their particular cliques, naïve – and outright stupid. And most of them waste far too much time in front of the television, when they might read, pursue useful hobbies, meditate, network, or be creative or productive. Even the popularity of metaphysical studies, alone, has not corrected these matters. Spiritual knowledge, belief, religion, and theology only have real meaning when they are balanced with a healthy human culture and lifestyle. We all know how pious fundamentalism in backward cultures can spawn terrorism. But likewise, much New Age mysticism is a means of getting spaced out on the airy realities of the higher planes, while letting the entire human world go straight to the infernal regions. This is a Left-wing version of an old fundamentalist attitude. Many fundamentalists have seen the world headed into shambles, but saw their particular belief system as the one and only hope. Believing that they would live only once, and would then enter Paradise forever, they left the rest of the "sinful" world to God. The New Age version of this irresponsibility is just to look glibly around at the world and say that it's all okay! It might as well be spacing out on drugs – because mysticism without being well-grounded has many of the same escapist effects. The stark reality, though, is that the entire human civilization has collective responsibility for its future. Neither traditional fundamentalist beliefs, nor spacing out on mysticism or drugs, will spare any of us from our personal and collective karma. We will continue to come back to what we have created – or to what we have allowed others to create while we stood idly by. We all will come back until we have brought the entire culture of Earth into full spiritual enlightenment. That is, if we ever do at all. And if we do not – being slowly digested by the Dragon, as our culture slides forever into degradation and chaos, is not a pretty picture. If we won't tie our own shoes, then don't expect God to – because that's not the way things work. With the arrival of the Apocalypse, the forefront of evolving humanity is out of the spiritual nest. The Trance no longer will carry us in any constructive direction. We now are a civilization of young spiritual adults. We must rise to that challenge and create our future knowingly, or experience the utterly miserable consequences of failure if we do not.

It would be well, then, to express some of those true American values, as mentioned in chapter 1. Categorically, they are any and all qualities that will restore America's faltering greatness, and allow her to proceed to an even greater future. The obvious should be personal responsibility; independence in thought and action; self-discipline; self-education in civic matters; constructive social activism and humanitarian concerns; human empathy, but with tough love when called for; and personal career and life ambitions for true achievement, as opposed to just making money and spending it. Add to that the evolving holistic enlightenment of Body, Mind, and Spirit. Find balance and true wisdom in spiritual matters, by rising above repressive fundamentalism and New Age glibness alike. Decide that you want yourself and all of your fellow infinite and immortal beings to have all the spiritual truth there is to know. Dedicate a significant part of your life to that quest, while maintaining a healthy physical and financial foundation. Make promoting the best relations possible between the genders a top personal and collective priority. Put that last point on a pedestal, and elevate it above all else. These are a very

[1]. Marvin Olasky, *The Tragedy of American Compassion* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 1992).

good cut at rightful American values for the third millennium. And they are a great formula for profound spiritual Awakening, and the rediscovery of our true spiritual roots.

We may rightly grumble about the social system, and work prudently to reform it. However, all true and lasting reform must start at home. If we want our leaders and governmental system to reflect healthy values, then each of us must develop the self-discipline to live them in our daily lives. Integrity is paramount. For many of us, a necessary step may be to distance ourselves gently from organizations and friends whose values are not harmonious with those values that conscience demands. This often necessitates the pains of finding new friends and allies. Nevertheless – having clarified the personal and collective responsibility of Americans and Westerners for our current plight, the fact remains that we have a highly corrupt system on our hands. And so now, we must roll up our sleeves and go through whatever pains and sacrifices are necessary to fix it.

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The crisis faced today by the citizens of America and the West would *morally* justify bloody war – if it were the optimal strategy to get the job done. But I don't think it is. I'm mentioning the point only to emphasize just how great are the stakes. In practice, what is needed is a thoughtful, self-disciplined, and unstoppable grass-roots movement of citizens who will make whatever efforts and sacrifices it takes to reclaim our streets, our root values, and true democratic governance. At first, the odds may seem daunting. But fear must be one of the first things to go, as it's a prime tool of the Dragon. Was it President Franklin D. Roosevelt who said that we have nothing to fear but fear itself? With a formidable Direct Democracy movement coalescing over time, its momentum can become unstoppable. True freedom for healthy-minded American citizens, and the protection and rehabilitation of the waning middle class, are paramount objectives of Direct Democracy. A strong, prosperous, and intellectual middle class with healthy family values is vital to true spiritual awakening and human freedom.

If this book has struck a chord with readers over political matters, there might be a rush to anger at the establishment and system. If not well-directed, this could lead to unseemly acts. But thoughtless and undisciplined actions tend to backfire, and to hurt the causes they purport to help. In the pursuit of Direct Democracy and all related social reform, it is of paramount importance that every individual and group acts within the law, and seeks to promote healthy change through due process. Leave corruption and unseemly acts to the opposition, including resistive figures in high places. This strategy will discredit those who serve the Dragon, and help the People to achieve victory, in time. But don't expect it to be a quick and glorious battle in a hayfield. Moving as quickly as possible is vital, as there is relatively little time left. Yet, having said that, Armageddon will take as long as it takes, and will demand whatever dedication and sacrifices are necessary to get the job done. It behooves all of us as leading citizens of the New Age and Apocalypse to be unflinchingly idealistic in our goals, but devilishly pragmatic about how to accomplish them. In the Battle of Armageddon it's not how you play that counts, except to the degree that wise play maximizes effectiveness. The triumph of Righteousness is purely a matter of winning at all costs – and the fate of Earth's civilization utterly depends on our success.

I hope that this book has been a worthwhile tour of the heavens and the Earth. In wrapping up, there is an old Texas tradition that is pertinent. We like to talk about the "Good News" and the "Bad News." So now I'll share them both.

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First the Good News. . . . If we Americans rise to the challenge, conquer the Dragon, and lead America and the West forward to true enlightenment, then what follows is a smattering of

the results that we can expect. America, once again, will have a governmental system that is truly "Of the People, by the People, and for the People." Our public servants will again be just that, rather than the plutocratic puppets that they recently have become. The voting system will be enhanced so that the most popular candidates will be elected, with no fears of thrown elections or wasted votes. The entire political system will become more centered and less rancorous. The People will be able to vote directly on every important issue – from the death penalty to church-state matters to prayer and candy canes in public schools; and even on speed bumps and recorded store commercials, if needed. Balance will be brought to hot-button issues such as gay rights, in lieu of the positions sought by extremists. The medical industry, including insurance, will be reformed in the manner that is most acceptable to a majority of voters. Trade deficits will be reduced, and then eliminated altogether. Americans will have the final say over where their products are made. Jobs will be brought home to American shores, for American citizens and their posterity. The effects of foreign money will be thoroughly squelched. The corporate world will be purged of its arrogance and corruption; and big business will serve the American People, rather than the other way around. With the dust of Armageddon eventually settling, the Apocalypse will carry the civilization forward and upward into a new age of holistic health and spiritual enlightenment. The Trance and its demons will be nipped in the bud. True Awakening will bring back our long-forgotten spiritual powers and abilities – many of which are almost beyond current human imagination. Our human egos will again be one with our Higher Selves. Prosperity, healthy family values, cooperation, and love will pervade the Western world; and, in time, will spread to every corner of planet Earth. The Spirit and the Bride will bring the Water of Life to all. Serious evil will be utterly gone from the world, because collective awareness will leave it with no place to hide or breed. And the illusion of distinctions between humankind, spirit kind, and divinity will be fully erased. The Apple of duality will be back on the Tree. And Eden will be reclaimed.

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And now the Bad News. . . . If we fail at our Apocalyptic responsibilities, what follows are some of the results that we can expect. Washington will carry on "business as usual" while our school kids are reminded that American government is "Of the People, by the People, and for the People." The rule of plutocracy will continue, and become ever more global. The existing voting system will be faithfully maintained, ensuring that the two polarized parties of Washington insiders maintain their clout. Politics will continue to be the arena of rancor and mud-slinging. There will be no ballot initiatives in Washington, as our "representatives" are more than happy to vote in our steads. Thirty years from now, the courts still will be hearing new arguments about prayer and other religion-sensitive issues in public schools. After all, such never-ending litigation is the lifeblood of our venerable lawyers. Recorded store commercials and other advertising will bombard us every moment of our lives. Technology may even enable us to receive subliminal commercials while we sleep. Whatever conglomeration of medical insurance we have will be the most expensive and unpalatable to the voters. Organ transplants will continue to be given to prisoners and welfare recipients at taxpayer expense, and the medical industry will happily lap up the profits. The character of holistic health will be that welfare recipients are entitled to free vitamins and supplements, courtesy of the taxpayers.

Strict gay rights may be mandated, but it won't resolve all the problems. One day at school, a boy will be offended because another boy made a pass at him. And immaturity being what it is, the offended kid will punch the other out. But the angry youth won't be paddled in the principal's office, as all corporal punishment – even by parents – will be a federal civil rights

violation. Instead, he'll be sent for mandatory psychiatric treatment, courtesy of the taxpayers through the nation's universal healthcare system. His wise counselor will inform him that the reason for his anger is his own latent homosexual tendencies, which he's afraid to acknowledge. The intent of the therapy will be to get him to accept and act upon his suppressed inclinations, so that his anger will be dispelled. And the advent of the best new designer drugs from the pharmaceutical industry will help ensure that the therapy is successful.

Most remaining American jobs will be in the fast food industry, where citizens will work for the Third-World owners of these chains. There also will be some day-care jobs, as no family will be able to afford stay-at-home moms. The only affluent will be those who sell their souls to the giant international corporations as their top executives. The rest will be the gaunt-eyed workers who serve them, in a quest for a meager living. The once-booming American middle class will forever be history. But "discrimination" eventually will become a thing of the past. With an overwhelmed and disempowered public, the Dragon will chew up and spit out all cultures of the world, absorbing their virtues and beauty, and leaving only their folly and wretchedness. With no cultural roots left, and no values to aspire to but money, one worker-slave will be indistinguishable from the next.

But then there's metaphysics. What of metaphysics and spirituality? There still will be Tarot card readers and psychic hotlines. A few mediums will hold séances, so that a family can get in touch with late Aunt Minnie. Astrology will continue to hold some fascination. Lovers will look up their signs to see if they are compatible. Western fundamentalism will continue its slow decline, but some pockets will persist due to disgust over liberal extremism. Most metaphysical work will be New Age stuff, from breathing exercises to spacey mysticism; and it will be utterly devoid of all moral implications. But what about "deep" spirituality – with its balance, wisdom, and higher morality? Well, it still will be carried along by the Few who Know. There always have been a Few who Know. And when the Dragon has decisively won the battle of Armageddon, these few Sages and Adepts will look around in dismay. They will realize that they have failed utterly in their missions. Any efforts they made to help the world were too little and too late. In surveying the dismal ruins, they may pray to divine consciousness that a reprieve will come. Perhaps Providence will send a great asteroid hurtling into Earth, destroying all the wretched and degraded life left on the planet. The souls may then be liberated into space – someday to settle again into another world on which intelligent, humanoid life is evolving. And after millennia of caves, tents, castles, covered wagons, brick homes, washing machines, cell phones, and computers, human consciousness may again evolve until it is ready for spiritual maturity. An Apocalypse may come, giving these souls yet another opportunity to slay the Dragon and Awaken. And there is at least a chance this time that maybe – just maybe – we might not blow it.

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I've enjoyed our visit. Before running the spelling checker and saving this final chapter to disk, I'll close by offering the following thoughts: The path to spiritual enlightenment is paved with embarrassing realizations that yesterday's wisdom has become today's folly. Evil often is yesterday's righteousness that has outlived its time.

The End

. . . or a New Beginning?

Use Your Judgment!

Appendix A

Daily Newspapers – Author's Challenge to Reader

These appendixes contain several suggestions for further reading, and useful websites. However, the author also wishes to put in a very strong plug for printed newspapers, to anyone who aspires even to serious personal ambition, let alone greatness.

Newspaper circulation has been in a slump in the early 21st century. Some think papers are obsolete, but that's a fickle trend. It can be prompted by a sense that computers are "cool," but also from a lackadaisical attitude that has relegated patriotism and civic interest to the background for many.

The Web is a fantastic research tool, but is not so good at offering a comprehensive civic education. It only informs on the subjects you know to look for. And it is full of noise and deception from dubious sources that must be separated from reliable information. Admittedly, it can be used to read some newspapers online, but it doesn't encourage as much start-to-finish reading.

Television news programming has its limitations. Public channel news programs sometimes delve into one topic in great detail. That has its place. But what about the other 99 out of 100 important topics the program did not cover?

Local TV news does include some nice weather forecasts. Beyond that, it's much more a form of entertainment than an educational news forum. The anchors put on a good show, wearing smiles while talking about the baby animal in the zoo, and then donning frowns and shaking their heads while talking about who shot who over on the wrong side of the tracks. These shows are particularly appealing to Earth natives who have not yet become One of Us, and who like a little emotional stimulation during dinner. Rumor has it that it helps them digest their food better.

If you're not already a regular printed news reader, the author extends this challenge: Try reading at least the national and world news in a major city newspaper for one year. Don't miss the Supreme Court decisions. Then see if you don't feel more knowledgeable of the world's affairs, find them more interesting than you thought, and even feel a sense of growing personal maturity. One caveat: It's needful to use your BS meter to filter out any questionable analysis and the political biases of the reporters; and to focus on the actual facts.

Admittedly, newspapers have local news and many other types of chatter that are not always of interest to everyone. But for decades, it's been the author's practice to read through the national and international news daily, while taking only a quick glance at items of interest in other sections. In terms of accumulating the insights necessary to understand the world and to produce this book, the printed newspapers have been every bit as enlightening as books on Qabalah and the physical sciences.

Appendix B

Bibliography and Suggested Reading

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For additional bibliographical entries, see appendix C – Movies of Interest, and appendix D – Tarot Decks of Interest.

The Kybalion, by Three Initiates, is a classic and very popular work on Hermetic philosophy. It is a relatively short, pocket-size reference, but is provocative and enlightening. While hardbound copies may be obtained through bookstores, it also is available as a free download on some websites. See appendix E – Websites of Interest, for more information.

The Mystical Qabalah is one of the easiest reads in terms of a good introductory book on Qabalah. It was originally published in England in 1935. Its author – Dion Fortune – was an accomplished mystic and spiritualist in early 20th century England. She was brought up in a family that practiced Christian Science, but turned to Rosicrucian-style occultism in her adulthood. There are touches of Christian perspective in her book, although that theme does not predominate. It is a good work on the use of Qabalah for mystical purposes. There have been numerous other books on Qabalah written in more recent times, and which use somewhat more contemporary language. However, the author has not, to date, discovered many recently written

Qabalah books that are satisfying to him. The main complaint is that many of the recent authors seem to be promoting specialized agendas of their own – religious agendas, for example – that do not do justice to Qabalah from its historical perspective. Fortune, however, does a good job of describing traditional Qabalistic mysticism from a non-Jewish, esoteric perspective. See below for a good reference from the Jewish perspective. Fortune also wrote a number of other non-fiction and fiction books of a mystical nature.

A Kabbalistic Universe is one of the most readable, modern introductions to Kabbalah from the perspective of Judaism. ("Kabbalah" is the spelling preferred by most English-speaking Jews; whereas "Qabalah" is the most commonly used spelling in non-Jewish metaphysical circles.) Its author, Z'ev ben Shimon Halevi, is a teacher of Kabbalah. His book shows many connections of Kabbalistic doctrine with the Torah, or Jewish Bible (roughly, the "Old Testament"). Whereas Fortune's book, described above, focuses on mysticism, Halevi's work focuses more on Kabbalah as it applies to the nature and creation of the cosmos. Halevi also has written several other worthwhile books on Kabbalah.

A Garden of Pomegranates is an interesting book on Qabalah, although not recommended as a first introduction to the subject. It's author – Israel Regardie – was a contemporary of Dion Fortune, whose work is mentioned above. Regardie was a major figure in the original Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn – a Rosicrucian organization that was founded in England, and which later migrated to America. He was ethnically Jewish; but as an adult, he focused on Rosicrucian occultism, including its Judaic and Christian aspects. Regardie lived in Arizona at the time of his death in 1985. *A Garden of Pomegranates* was his first of several books, written at the age of 24. He tended to use somewhat stilted language in parts of it, as new writers often do, which makes the first couple of chapters a bit laborious to read. But his book has merit – especially in the way his subsequent chapters link the spheres on the Qabalistic Tree of Life with the gods and goddesses of many pantheons. For anyone who already has read at least one book on Qabalah and feels motivated to read more, this is a thought-provoking work by one of the prominent figures in modern Qabalistic and Rosicrucian circles. Some of Regardie's other books shed much light on the Golden Dawn and many of its previously secret rituals and practices.

The Book of Lilith documents an ancient Qabalistic tradition of the Divine Feminine, and explores some of the deepest aspects of the psychology of awakening feminine consciousness. It is a relatively short and readable book, and contains numerous photos of interesting Qabalistic artifacts. Its author, Dr. Barbara Black Koltuv, is a prominent Jungian psychoanalyst, and has written several other books that are focused predominately on the feminine. Qabalistic archetypes often appear among the characters of folklore and contemporary fiction. The author of the current work sees a parallel between Lilith and Shekinah – two aspects of the feminine alienated from their rightful divinity – and the "wicked" witches of the West and East in the various *Wizard of Oz* traditions. Eve – Adam's second wife after Lilith, according to Qabalistic tradition – corresponds to Glinda, the "good" witch. (See appendix C for *Wizard of Oz* movie bibliography.) Nevertheless, this perspective can serve to perpetuate the traditional dualities, stereotypes, and misconceptions of good and evil. Many of these misconceptions, in fact, are embedded in Qabalistic tradition and literature, as much of it was produced during a lengthy era of Patriarchal imbalance. The Qabalistic perception of Shekinah as "holy" and Lilith as "demonic" has served to perpetuate fundamentalism, sexual repression, and the subjugation of women throughout the entire Western monotheistic tradition. *The Book of Lilith* makes clear that

Lilith and Shekinah must both be exalted back to their rightful divinity for the Great Goddess to be reawakened, and for balance and salvation to be restored to humankind and spirit kind. To wit, all three "witches" are different aspects of feminine "good," but must have their divine dignity and awareness restored to be freed of evil imbalances. Eve has been perceived as the "good" one, simply because she was more submissive to Adam during a period of Patriarchal consciousness that was promoted by Shekinah in her rivalry with Lilith.

Left Brain, Right Brain, by Sally P. Springer and Georg Deutsch, is one of the best works available on the psychology and neurology of the left and right brain hemispheres. It is lucid enough to be appreciated by a layman, but is very scientifically rigorous. While this work is entirely scientific, students of Qabalah will appreciate the connections between modern science and the ancient mystical traditions.

Gaming the Vote, by William Poundstone, is a must-read for anyone interested in comparative methods of vote collection and tallying – especially in political elections. It is entertaining and full of political intrigue, and yet is very informative technically.

The Parties Versus the People, by Mickey Edwards – a former US congressman – lays bare the myriad ways in which American politics has been corrupted to dysfunctionality, especially by party polarization. The book offers many constructive ways in which America's citizens can work actively to fix the broken system. Edwards cofounded No Labels and is a leader within the Aspen Institute. See appendix E – Websites of Interest, for more information on these organizations.

The Tragedy of American Compassion, by Marvin Olasky, is a superb exposé of the folly of the current American welfare system – with a thorough historical examination to support his conclusions. Admittedly, Olasky's analysis is from the viewpoint of a religious conservative; and, in that regard, stands in some contrast to the metaphysical messages of this book. Nevertheless, his scathing indictment of public welfare programs is universal and timeless. It is challenge and tough love, rather than "unconditional love" and sympathy, that best guide every human spirit to rise to his or her full potential.

Messengers is fun fiction, and is very metaphysical. It is a spiritual adventure that extends from Mayan ruins to the pyramids of Egypt. We all need some "R&R." Enjoy this entertaining work written by Julie Loar (formerly Gillentine) – an accomplished astrologer who also is a friend of the author. See also appendix E – Websites of Interest. (The cited edition of *Messengers* was published under the name Julie Gillentine. She also has published more recent works under the name Julie Loar.)

In Bad Taste: The MSG Symptom Complex, by George R. Schwartz, MD, is a must-read for citizens who wish to protect themselves from harmful food additives, as well as for those who want American government to do its job in providing that kind of protection to all.

Your Medical Mind: How to Decide What is Right for You, by Drs. Jerome Groopman and Pamela Hartzband, is a thought-provoking work that advocates a major rewiring of the doctor-patient relationship. The sensible and balanced direction for a new era is dialog and teamwork.

The Merck Manual of Diagnosis and Therapy is a must-own for people who want to be

informed patients, so as to discuss disease and treatment more intelligently with their physicians. More-common family medical books have their rightful places, but fall very short in this regard. Far too many of them offer little more than the advice to see your doctor if you have certain symptoms. *The Merck Manual* is written in professional medical language, and so most people will require access to a good medical dictionary to decipher it. However, Merck also publishes a helpful consumer version of this book, which translates the doctor-speak into plain English for the rest of us dummies. Nevertheless, the author prefers the professional edition, as it contains at least a little useful information that he was not able to locate in the consumer edition. Historically, new editions of the professional version have been published about every five years.

Physicians' Desk Reference (***PDR***) is another bible for people wishing to be informed patients. It allows patients to verify the nature and intent of prescribed drugs, and to note risks and side-effects that they may wish to discuss with their physicians. Unfortunately, the printed information that pharmacists distribute with medications often falls short in this regard. As with *Merck*, mentioned above, a good medical dictionary is needful to decipher it. New editions of the main PDR are published annually, and can be a bit pricey for many families. However, a relatively recent edition will include most commonly prescribed medications. There also are several special PDR books, some of them published only once every few years. Two of consumer interest are ***PDR for Nutritional Supplements*** and ***PDR for Herbal Medicines***. These books contain the results of scientific studies of medicinal usage of numerous supplements and herbs, many of which are available in health food groceries and vitamin shops. While the studies debunk some traditional uses of various substances, they confirm the effectiveness of others. And as with prescription drugs, these studies warn of possible side-effects and adverse reactions, along with safe-dosage information.

Appendix C

Movies of Interest

Blade Runner: The Final Cut, DVD. Directed by Ridley Scott. Burbank, California: Warner Home Video, 2010.
Carrie, DVD. Directed by Brian DePalma. Beverly Hills, California: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1976.
The Dark Crystal, DVD. Directed by Jim Henson and Frank Oz. Culver City, California: The Jim Henson Company, 2005.
Dune, original theatrical edition, DVD. Directed by David Lynch. Universal City, California: Universal Studios, 2005.
Excalibur, DVD. Directed by John Boorman. Burbank, California: Warner Bros., 1981.
Exodus, DVD. Directed by Otto Preminger. Beverly Hills, California: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1960.
Star Trek V, The Final Frontier, DVD. Directed by William Shatner. Hollywood, California: Paramount Pictures Corporation, 1989.
The Wicker Man, DVD. Directed by Robin Hardy. Santa Monica, California: Lions Gate Films Inc., 1973.
The Wizard of Oz, two-disc special edition, DVD. Directed by Victor Fleming. Burbank, California: Warner Home Video, 2005.

The ratings shown in brackets apply to the editions obtained by the author. Editions obtained by readers may be rated differently.

Carrie [**R**] (1976 film) is one of the best spiritual horror films ever made, while full of fun and humor, being set in high school culture. It is also the ultimate depiction of religiously motivated child abuse. Carrie's fundamentalist mother keeps her daughter sexually ignorant, and tries to make her ashamed of her own body. Nevertheless, Carrie is a symbol for spiritual awakening, as she discovers that she has special gifts. Her mother comes to believe that these gifts would justify killing her for being a witch. While the dynamics are exaggerated to make an entertaining story, they are essentially the same as those that play out every day in religiously repressive families and cultures around the world. How can a child rediscover his or her higher purposes in time and eternity upon being told that metaphysical studies are against God's will, and that natural psychic abilities are from the devil? (This 1976 film, starring Sissy Spacek and Piper Laurie, should not be confused with some later "remakes" with other actors. The author feels that the original is the best.)

The Wicker Man [**R**] (1973 film) is arguably the most tasteful, brilliant, and sexy art film of all time. Veteran actor Christopher Lee is said to consider it one of his best films and roles. On its face, it is a mild horror film about a Christian police officer who is befooled and victimized by Celtic pagans. However, in a spiritually awakening contemporary culture, it is a superb metaphor for the demise of fundamentalist religious bigotry, and for the return to spiritual roots in an age of metaphysical enlightenment. (Note that this 1973 film is not to be confused with a "remake" with the same title that was made in 2006 by another producer. The two stories have only superficial similarities.)

Exodus [**NR**], starring Paul Newman, is the 1960 epic that never dies. The intense adventure story is so entertaining that it will keep viewers on the edges of their seats for all of its 3½ hours. Fictional in its characters and details, it makes graphic the very real struggle of the Jewish people to establish their own homeland after Nazi persecution, and the partitioning of Palestine by the United Nations to create the state of Israel. Its portrayal of the ethnic struggles in the Middle East is as current now as then, and the struggle continues to the moment. Every home in America should own a copy. The film helps to repudiate an unfortunate resurgence in anti-Semitism and undue criticism of Israel in continuing to defend herself from destruction. Its music is still one of the most popular movie themes of all time.

Dune [**PG-13**] is a very entertaining science fiction adventure. But it also is a powerful metaphor for social liberation. The pure and evolved people of the planet Dune summon all of their resources – both spiritual and military – to burst free from domination by a powerful and corrupt coalition of plutocrats. The story is also about spiritual awakening to higher plateaus – humankind becoming all that it can be.

Blade Runner: The Final Cut [**R**] is superb science fiction entertainment. Yet, it also is an intense metaphor for the future of Earth if globalism and plutocracy proceed to their conclusions. Most animal species are almost extinct. The social masses consist of the dregs of the culture, living in shabby dives and urban rubble. They are bombarded constantly with advertising. The few who are comfortable are the top executives of the super-rich corporations. A corporate giant produces adult humans through genetic engineering, rather than via natural reproduction. These humans are viewed as "machines" and used for slave labor. Since they are considered property, the powers-that-be feel free to execute, or "retire," any of them at will. The story's ill-placed hero, played by Harrison Ford, is a policeman who ultimately sees the light and changes sides.

Star Trek V, The Final Frontier [**PG**] is a potent metaphor for the spiritual awakening of Earth in these Apocalyptic times. The false, external "God" that was thought to be the source of salvation turns out to be a repressive creation of human consciousness, and not a god at all. Its eventual destruction leaves the players speculating about the true divinity within.

The Dark Crystal [**PG**] is a metaphor for unraveling some of the deepest of spiritual mysteries. Somewhere within each of us lies the Truth that we left behind a very long time ago. Between each of us and that Truth lie our deepest complexes – our Jungian "Shadow Selves." These embody everything that we perceive as evil, and all that seems to oppose us. As we reawaken to the Truth, we rediscover our personal and collective responsibilities for all that we have called "evil" – as well as for all that we have called "good." It is this ultimate spiritual rediscovery that results in full Eternal Awakening, Liberation, and Empowerment.

Excalibur [**R**] is, of course, the classic Arthurian legend of ambition, sorcery, failed romance, quest for the Grail of redemption, and hope for the future. The story contains a number of interesting synchronicities – simultaneous happenings that are connected by powerful spiritual forces, while occurring at physical distance. It also is a spiritually accurate depiction of some of the major, archetypal players of Earth's civilization, struggling in the throes of the Trance, centuries before the Apocalypse would offer the possibility of true resolution. As Arthur said toward the end, Camelot was a fair beginning. But now, with planet Earth at its most trying cusp, perhaps the Sword will rise again, and the Grail of Truth will be reclaimed for all.

The Wizard of Oz [**G**] is too classic to leave out of a list of recommended movies for spiritualists. As it was filmed in the early 20th century, it lacked the contemporary drive to arrive stably at higher reality, rather than only to dream about it. Perhaps the Dorothy of those times had to conclude that it was just a dream – only to awaken in a new era and discover that it is true!

Appendix D

Tarot Decks of Interest

Cicero, Sandra Tabatha and Chic Cicero. *The New Golden Dawn Ritual Tarot.* St. Paul, Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications, 1991.

Crowley, Aleister, and Lady Frieda Harris, illustrator. *The Aleister Crowley Thoth Tarot Deck.* New York: U.S. Game Systems, Inc., 1978.

Smith, Pamela Colman, illustrator. *Giant Rider-Waite Tarot Deck.* Stamford, Connecticut: U.S. Game Systems, Inc., 1992.

Some readers not already familiar with the Tarot may be overwhelmed by the varieties available in book stores and online. They may ask what might be a good first deck to buy. One answer is simply to browse a case full of decks and select one with a theme that seems personally appealing. Many decks have been published to appeal to the interests of different consumers. Yet, in the author's opinion, many of the contemporary decks serve very specialized audiences and purposes. They have their place. However, in chapter 9 of this book, the author described an idealized and classic rendition of the Tarot, that is rich in symbolism that relates readily to the higher concepts in other systems of spiritual thought – particularly the Qabalah and the Apocalypse. In his opinion, the hundreds of available decks are far from equal in this regard.

The author's ideal Tarot deck would have these two qualities, in particular: First, it would use images that reflect a long-standing European tradition, and that readily convey the Qabalistic and Hermetic concepts generally associated with that tradition. Second, the art should be very eye-catching, stimulating, and inspiring. It is unfortunate that the author's perfect deck apparently has yet to be published, at least in modern times. In fact, it is a synthesis of Tarot history and written discussions of the Tarot, that have yet to show up in a single deck, in the author's opinion.

The Tarot decks listed below, however, all have great merit in these regards. The descriptions list the ways in which each excels. If a curious reader were to purchase and peruse the few listed below, it would amount to an excellent education on the subject, and would bring the satisfaction of owning some of the best decks on the market.

The Giant Rider-Waite Tarot Deck is truly a classic, and one of the most popular. In the first decade of the twentieth century, famed spiritualist and author Arthur Edward Waite, associated with the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, commissioned Pamela Colman Smith to paint images for his own idealized Tarot pack. To this day, it easily is the best choice for a first deck. The images are thoughtfully designed and full of symbolism, and the art is of very good quality. Overall, it typifies the above-mentioned European tradition as well as any other. This is especially evident in its 22 trump cards which exemplify most traditional writing on the Tarot and its spiritualism. Its one noticeable shortcoming – from the author's perspective – is that the suit face cards consist of a King, Queen, Knight, and Page; and thus do not include a Prince and Princess. This flaw is far from fatal. These cards suggest many of the qualities of the alchemical

elements of Fire, Water, Air, and Earth; as well as the corresponding qualities of Chokmah, Binah, Tiphareth, and Malkuth on the Qabalistic Tree of Life. They simply omit the respective Son vs. Daughter, gender-specific qualities of Air and Earth, and of Tiphareth and Malkuth.

The New Golden Dawn Ritual Tarot was illustrated by Sandra Tabatha Cicero. Sandra and her husband, Chic Cicero, who co-authored the deck, are modern-day Adepts of the reestablished Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, based in Florida. They have authored numerous spiritual books. The deck's art is vivid and stimulating. The major symbols in the images reflect the European tradition. And best of all, its suit face cards consist of a King, Queen, Prince, and Princess. If a reader wants a well-balanced deck that includes these gender images, this is one of the best to buy.

The Aleister Crowley Thoth Tarot Deck was designed by Aleister Crowley, who at one time had membership in the original Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in England, and who authored many thought-provoking books during his lifetime. The superb paintings were done by Lady Frieda Harris. Crowley invoked his considerable creativity and imagination in deliberately deviating from the European Tarot tradition in ways that reflected his own spiritual opinions and insights. Its face cards, for example, are Knight, Queen, Prince, and Princess. The deck is very popular, due to its intensely stimulating images.

Appendix E

Websites of Interest

The websites listed below are for information only. They are sites that have caught the author's attention, and that a reader may find of interest. While these sites appear to be stable, they may be deleted, or may change ownership or content at any time. In most cases, the author cannot vouch for the integrity of the site owners. Readers are advised to exercise the same caution in accessing these sites as should be exercised with any others.

Most of the site owners are not personally acquainted with the author. It should be presumed that none of the site owners have, in any way, endorsed this book, its philosophy, or any of its content – although they may feel free to express a position on it in the future if they so choose. Therefore, they should not be contacted about this book. Questions or comments about this book should be sent by postal mail to the author via the publisher.

The Hermetic Resource Site – **www.hermetics.org**. To download a PDF version of ***The Kybalion***, as mentioned in Suggested Reading, access **www.hermetics.org/pdf/kybalion.pdf**. When download completes, save a copy to disk. Requires a PDF viewer such as Adobe Reader.

B.O.T.A. – **Builders of the Adytum** – **www.bota.org**. A mystery school in the Rosicrucian and Golden Dawn traditions. Their online store offers esoteric books, Hermetic and Qabalistic posters, and more.

There are societies in many regions dedicated to public, lay studies and appreciation of the philosophy of **Carl G. Jung** – the famous pioneer in psychoanalysis. A web search on "**CG Jung Society**" will find many of them. Typically, they may feature PhD and other distinguished speakers several times per year. Jung was versed in Qabalah, Gnosticism, and other esoteric work. These had a strong influence on his philosophy, writings, and professional counseling practice.

Julie Loar – **www.julieloar.com**. This is a professional website of Julie Loar, an award-winning author, international astrologer, and Taroist, who also is a friend of the author. Her site is a source for books, astrological work, sacred travel tours, and much more.

Meetup – **www.meetup.com**. The author has occasionally been contacted online by people outside his locality, wondering where to find metaphysical study groups in their areas. Meetup is an online, international network for social groups covering everything from environmentalism, to quilting, to politics and religion of any persuasion, to metaphysics and self-help – and a great deal more. A search by one's zip code locates nearby groups. And new acquaintances met at these groups often will know of similar area groups that may not be organized under Meetup. At this writing, joining Meetup online is free. Some of the specific groups have one-time, annual, or per-meeting charges, whereas many are free. Anyone can start a Meetup group, for nominal charges. The network provides the means to publicize one's group, to track group membership,

and to receive RSVPs.

Institute for American Values – **www.americanvalues.org** – is a national organization focused on issues of family and civil society. It strongly supports the institution of marriage and the traditional family.

No Labels – **www.nolabels.org** – is a national organization founded in 2010 to promote a politics of problem solving, working to replace rancor and party polarization with constructive cooperation across the political spectrum.

The Aspen Institute – **www.aspeninstitute.org** – is a national organization founded in 1950 to promote quality leadership among the nation's leaders in a nonpartisan venue.